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**The Parrot's Voice and the Partridge's Feathers: The Linguaging of Animals and Animal
Language in Early Indian Texts**

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**The Parrot's Voice and the Partridge's Feathers: The Linguaging of
Animals and Animal Language in Early Indian Texts**

by

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Abstract

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Language about animals and the way writers “language” animals reveal a great deal about how humans model themselves, animals, and human-animal relations; pre-modern Indian literature is no different. The early poets and story writers of India transposed humans with animals and vice versa, usually via speaking birds. Sanskrit grammarians explored the question of what defines human and animal through the lens of speech, including bird speech. Recent research in the areas of animal studies and new materialism aids our understanding of these early literary forms and historical discussions from the subcontinent. I explore a number of Sanskrit and Pāli texts from literary, religious, and commentarial traditions in order to develop a new assessment of agency enacted through animal voice and speech. I posit that a “Brahmin-bird entanglement” has been existent since the Vedic period in texts and recitation practices and that Brahmins identified with and entangled their traditions with birds, accounting for bird names for ascetic practices, hymns, and Vedic lineages. Sometimes texts envisioned birds as retainers of Brahmanical

traditions; at other times, entanglements between human and bird show how authors defined and differentiated religious identity. I propose a re-interpretation of authorship that challenges pre-existing ideas about the recitation tradition and creative acts of speech. Using evidence from epic, Puranic, and Buddhist literature along with grammatical debates and the early Sanskrit novel, I illuminate ideas concerning subjectivity, narration, and voice that were present in early Indian texts.

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The Brahmin-Bird Entanglement

Ṛgveda 2.43 “Omen-Bird”

1. Turning toward the right the bards sing welcome—the birds speaking at their proper season, the birds of omen. It speaks both speeches like a sāman-singer: it regulates both gāyatrī and triṣṭubh meters.
2. Like the Udgātar, o omen-bird, you sing the sāman. Like the Son of the Sacred Formulation, you recite at the pressings. Like a bullish prize-winner [=stallion] when he has approached (mares) with young, speak auspiciously to us in every way, omen-bird—speak pleasantly to us in all ways, omen-bird.
3. When you are speaking, omen-bird, speak auspiciously: when are you sitting silently, take note of our good thought. When as you fly up, you speak like a lute... - May we speak loftily at the ritual distribution, in possession of good heroes.¹

Ṛgvedic hymn 2.43 presents a few intriguing ideas that pertain to recent research within animal studies as it appears within the broader discussion of posthumanist thought.² The poet, Gṛtsamada, communicates to his listeners an appreciation of speech that does not assume the typical human animal versus non-human animal distinction, namely, that human animals are capable of speaking, while non-human animals are not. Many thinkers have traditionally created a divide between these two groups based on language abilities. This hymn’s framework does not allow for such a notion. Not only do the *śakunis* (birds) speak but they speak like humans, or at least like *udgātṛs*, priests who sing the *Sāmaveda*. Further, the poet directly addresses a bird (“o omen-bird”), and the bird “speak(s) pleasantly to us,” hence there is bidirectional inter-species communication. Of course, one might suggest that this bird talk is really just that—bird talk—

¹ *The Rigveda: The Earliest Religious Poetry of India*, vol. 1, translated by Stephanie W. Jamison and Joel P. Brereton (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 462-463.

² Posthumanism is a mode of philosophy, ethics, and interpretation that rejects the paradigmatic humanist binary divides, between body/mind, the self/other, human/animal, and organic/technological, to name a few. One of its primary tenets is the decentering of the human, a rejection of anthropocentrism. For scholars such as Cary Wolfe and Nina Varsava, posthumanism addresses questions of language and trans-species communication, social systems and their inclusions and exclusions, and a re-evaluation of humans in our environment. See Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010) and Nina Varsava, “The Problem of Anthropomorphous Animals: Toward a Posthumanist Ethics,” *Society & Animals*, Brill Advance Article, 1 (2013): 1-17.

and that the poet uses similes to suggest metaphorical meaning alone. Nonetheless, he presents animal language in a posthumanist mode.

A second matter is how the poet languages these animals. Language is a linguistic act that interlocutors sometimes use to distinguish animals, i.e., non-human animals, as different from human ones. This occurs in English with the use of pronouns such as “that,” “which,” or “it” to designate an animal, whereas pronouns such as “who,” “whose,” and “she/he” typically describe humans. The use of “it” denies an animal his or her gender and the use of “that” denies the animal’s “personhood.”³ Fortunately, Sanskrit grammar dictates that all nouns have gender (masculine, feminine, or neuter), thus words for animals necessarily indicate masculine or feminine, while some mythical beings and humans can also be neuter, asexual, or hermaphroditic. In this hymn, the birds are masculine when the poet indicates a plural group,⁴ but one verse does not identify the singular subject at all; the translator has opted to use neuter “it” in order to leave the same non-specificity for the subject as in the Sanskrit poem.⁵

The surprise when listening to this hymn is that the *śakuni* bird actually “sings the *sāman*,” thus presumably speaks utterances in human syllables and language. Although the poet leaves ambiguity, it is probably the bird who “regulates the *gāyatrī* meter” in verse one. What is

³ Donna Haraway and other scholars such as religious theorist Graham Harvey consider animals to have personhood and worthy of treatment as “other-than-human-persons.” See Donna J. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008, in particular: “grammar reference books’ granting derivative personhood only to those animals most incorporated into (Western) humanlike sexuality and kinship,” 207, and “The personal pronoun *who*, which is necessary in this situation, has nothing to do with derivative, Western, ethnocentric, humanist personhood for either people or animals, but rather has to do with the query proper to serious relationships among significant others.” 207-208.

⁴ In Sanskrit, the standard practice for referring to mixed plural groups that consist of female and male members is to use masculine plural, as in many languages.

⁵ *Rgveda* 2.43.1 pada c & d. *ubhé vācau vadati sāmāgā iva | gāyatrām ca traīṣṭubham cānu rājati* || The Online *Rigveda Metrically Restored Text*, by Barend A. van Nooten and Gary B. Holland, edited online by Karen Thomson and Jonathan Slocum, accessed October 1, 2014, <http://www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/lrc/RV/RV01.html#H162>.

more, the bird is “like the son of the Sacred Formulation” (*brahmaputra*),⁶ thus the child of *brahman*. It is uncertain how much of the semantic value of *brahman* at the time of R̥gvedic composition continues in the idea of Brahmin today, but one can certainly trace a historical-linguistic link from the *brahman* in *brahmaputra* that the poet uses to describe this bird to the Vedic formulations (*bráhman*), to the formulators (*brahmáns*) and on to Brahmins.

Although not explicit, I argue that this poem suggests a sort of entanglement⁷ between the idea of bird and the idea of Brahmin, my primary topic of discussion. In this report I develop an analysis of some interspecies transpositions⁸ between human (Brahmin) and animal (bird) existent in pre-modern India and I argue that language, speech, and voice played a large part in these transpositions. I explore how early thinkers and authors on the subcontinent negotiated interspecies relations in regard to language and I hypothesize some possible motivations for the Brahmin-bird entanglement that I have identified. In order to do this, I examine how some pre-modern South Asian authors and commentators distinguished “speech” and “voice” for the two groups of “human” and “animal.” I focus on a few examples of animal (in particular, bird) language and speech for this textual tradition in relation to the humans in their environs. Finally, I

⁶ *R̥gveda* 2.43.2 pada b. *brahmaputrā 'va sávanéṣu śamsasi* | The Online *R̥gveda Metrically Restored Text*. While the meaning of *brahmaputra* is uncertain, this “son of the formulation” is probably the *brahmán*, the formulator, the poet himself.

⁷ I take up the term from quantum physicist Karen Barad, which she used to describe the relation between subject and object, as I discuss below under subheading “The Brahmin-Bird Entanglement.” Karen Barad, “Matter feels, converses, suffers, desires, yearns and remembers,” Interview with Karen Barad, Ch. 1.3 in *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies*, Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin, Series: New Metaphysics, Open Humanities Press, Michigan Publishing, University of Michigan Library, 2012. Accessed May 15, 2014. <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/o/ohp/11515701.0001.001/1:4.3/--new-materialism-interviews-cartographies?rgn=div2;view=fulltext>.

⁸ Transposition, or rather, *Versetztsein*, (being transposed) was the term Martin Heidegger used in his discussion of the transfer of subjectivity into other, as I will discuss in the following section, “The Brahmin-Bird Entanglement.”

compare how this tradition's understanding of animal speech stands in the light of modern-day posthumanist, cognitive ethologist, and new materialist perspectives on animal studies.

An exhaustive study of this topic for Sanskrit and Prakrit literature is not possible within the scope of this report. Therefore, I focus on one series of Brahmanical and Buddhist stories that I have grouped together due to their presenting an etiology of the Taittirīya lineage via birds; I contrast this group of stories with a counterpoint from the earliest Sanskrit novel, Bāṇa's *Kādambarī*. Then I present a brief analysis of Brahmanical ideology and ontology in relation to living beings in order to gain philosophical insight into how to consider animals within a historical framework on the subcontinent. After, I analyze an unprecedented intellectual debate on the extent of animal speech within Pāṇini and Patañjali's grammar commentaries as well as the linguistic, philosophical, and religious context of this scholarly debate, of which I present an original translation (see *Appendix B*). I also incorporate a modern-day framework for analyzing this commentatorial literature on animal speech from the perspective of twentieth-century continental philosophy. Finally, I explore contributions from the area of new materialism to introduce how this group of thinkers offers new ways to envision interspecies relations and the story traditions of ancient India. I close my discussion with an examination of how the long-standing subject/object dichotomy in western humanities might hinder our understanding of pre-modern Indian thought and literature, and offer a novel approach to the topic of subjectivity.

The Brahmin-Bird Entanglement

From the outset I problematize the anthropocentric notions that human animals and non-human animals belong to separate groups and that the cognitive, linguistic, or other capacities of the two supposed groups are mutually exclusive. Humans are, in reality, animals, and thus only

one limited subset of the broader category of animal. Certainly there is a multiplicity of animal forms with differing capacities among species and individuals. It would be pointless to deny the richness of zoomorphs, of which the human species, anthropomorphic in nature, is but one manifestation, with capacities varying among individuals as well. For South Asian paradigms, including those that involve the transmigration of souls in reincarnation theory and other rebirth theories, Fabrizio M. Ferrari and Thomas Dähnhardt suggest that “the individualization of the human being and the otherization of the ‘animal other’ are less definite. The construction of the body is more flexible. Bodies are porous entities in(to) which the essence of beings moves temporarily.”⁹ Borders and groups are less rigid, and the overlap between different zoomorphic representations in South Asian literature can reveal information about how Sanskrit- and Prakrit-using societies of the past envisioned concepts such as identity and religious difference.

I propose to explore this porous quality within the domain that philosophers have most readily used to define difference in human (animal) versus (non-human) animal—speech and language. Early in recorded history (fourth century BCE), Aristotle considered that reason and the capacity for speech distinguish humans from other animals in his declaration “*logon de monon anthrōpos echei tōn zōiōn*”¹⁰ (“Of all creatures, the human alone has reason/speech.”) In the seventeenth century, René Descartes reasserted these rationalist humanist ideals when he claimed that the ability to speak separated humans from animals.¹¹ Countless other philosophers

⁹ Fabrizio M. Ferrari and Thomas Dähnhardt, Introduction, *Charming Beauties and Frightful Beasts: Non-Human Animals in South Asian Myth, Ritual and Folklore* (Bristol, CT: Equinox Publishing, Ltd., 2013), xiii.

¹⁰ Adapted from Frits Staal, “Mantras and Bird Songs,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 105.3, Indological Studies Dedicated to Daniel H. H. Ingalls (Jul.-Sept., 1985): 550.

¹¹ Margo DeMello, Introduction, *Speaking for Animals: Animal Autobiographical Writing*, ed. by Margo DeMello. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 5.

have followed suit, foremost being twentieth-century thinker Martin Heidegger.¹² Linguistic and communicative abilities have often been the point of contention used to assert human superiority, and not only in the west. Therefore, I approach the study of non-human animal speech in the South Asian milieu using the lens of one class of animals, the avians, precisely because of their abilities of articulation. I choose this lens because avian examples abound in Indic literature and not because I prioritize speech over other points from which I might analyze a perceived dialectic between human animal and non-human animal. Other valid factors for analysis beyond the scope of this study include consciousness, various sorts of intelligence such as geographic and spatial reasoning, memory, and the emotional and mental lives of beings, factors whose study is restricted by our human limitations.¹³

Despite Wendy Doniger’s statement that, in the Indian tradition, “there are, significantly, relatively few anthropomorphic stories about parrots,”¹⁴ I explore a few such stories with parrot speakers, as well as narratives with partridge speakers or characters. I choose these two birds because many texts use them in ways suggestive of the transposition between birds and Brahmins. It is curious that Sanskrit traditions so often blur or merge the identities of Brahmins and birds, evident even in the word *dvija*, meaning twice-born, referring to both birds and Brahmins or up-

¹² DeMello, *Speaking for Animals*, 5. For thinkers such as Humberto Maturana or Francisco Varela, in “In the Shadow of Wittgenstein’s Lion,” all human activity takes place in language: “every reflection, ...invariably takes place in language, which is our distinctive way of being human and being humanly active” in the world. But other scholars, in particular cognitive scientists researching brain development, animal language, and animals’ vocabulary retention in human languages, consider that “language arises....from fundamentally a human evolutionary processes of third-order structural couplings ...among so-called higher animals,” Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?*, xxii. More simply, these scientists theorize that the evolutionary developments responsible for using words as symbols and recognizing and responding to such symbols occurs at an evolutionary point in history far before human cerebral developments.

¹³ Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?*, 46.

¹⁴ Wendy Doniger, “Zoomorphism in Ancient India: Humans More Bestial than the Beasts,” in *Thinking with Animals: New Perspectives on Anthropomorphism*, edited by Lorraine Daston and Gregg Mitman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 17.

per caste members of society.¹⁵ If one is skeptical about this, one need only recall a character in the *Mahābhārata*, Śuka, the parrot son of Vyāsa, who was both Brahmin and bird. Although the *Mahābhārata* does not explicitly say that Śuka is either Brahmin or bird, his father is a Brahmin, and he receives his sacred thread in the *Śāntiparvan*, thus making him at least a twice-born.¹⁶ I consider him to be a bird because his mother took the form of a bird before conceiving him, because his name means parrot, and because he flies on more than one occasion.¹⁷

Śuka is an example of interspecies transposition, an idea that Jacques Derrida develops in *The Animal that Therefore I am*. He builds on the idea of being transposed, *das Versetztsein*, shifting from one existence to another, which Martin Heidegger posited briefly in his classic philosophical text that almost exclusively discussed human existence, *Sein und Zeit*. Derrida philosophizes:

Can we transpose (*versetzen*) what we say about man to *Dasein* (=being there, existence, existing)? What does *versetzen*, to transpose, mean, first of all from man to man, between humans? What does one do when one transposes, an essential question for this comparative analysis? What is ‘transposing,’ and can we transpose in the animal? That is the whole question of anthropomorphism, etc. Well, within this grand question, which is developed at great length, of the being-transposed-into-others, which he (Heidegger) characterizes as an essence of the human *Dasein*, being capable of transposing as proper to *Dasein*, he (Heidegger) writes: ‘Being transposed into others belongs to the essence of human *Dasein*. [*Das Versetztsein in Andere gehört zum Wesen des menschlichen Daseins*.] As long as we keep this insight in view then we already possess an essential point of orientation with respect to the particular problem concerning the possibility of human self-transposition into the animal. But how does

¹⁵ *Dvija* (twice-born) in the sense of a bird stems from the fact that that bird is first “born” as an egg and then, second, hatches from his shell. *Dvija* in the sense of Brahmin (or the top three castes, depending on the historical moment the term is used) refers to the first birth from a mother and the second birth at the time of *upanāyana* initiation, with the tying of the *sūtra* (sacred thread), marking the beginning of the student phase of life.

¹⁶ *Mahābhārata*, *Śāntiparvan*, Ch. 311, verses 18-19, *taṃ mahātmā svayaṃ prītyā devyā saha mahādyutiḥ | jātāmātraṃ muneh putraṃ vidhinopānayat tadā || 18 || tasya deveśvaraḥ śakro divyam adbhutadarśanam | dadau ka-maṇḍalum prītyā devavāsāṃsi cābhibho || 19 ||* Accessed Oct. 20, 2014, http://gretel.sub.uni-goettingen.de/gretel/1_sanskr/2_epic/mbh/sas/mahabharata.htm.

¹⁷ As at *kailāsaprsthād utpatya sa papāta divaṃ tadā | antarikṣacaraḥ śrīmān vyāsaputraḥ suniścitaḥ || Mahābhārata*, *Śāntiparvan*, Ch. 319, verse 10, and other passages.

this really help us? Have we thereby dispelled the difficulty which besets us when we attempt to transpose ourselves into an animal in any given case?”¹⁸

If the task is so difficult, why would anyone, even a poet, attempt this transposition from Brahmin to bird or vice versa? After all, it occurs in numerous situations, such as Brahmanical *śākhā* (lineage) names, for instance the *Taittirīya* (lineage from the *tittiri*, partridge) or the *Kauśikeya* (from *kauśika*, owl), and *Sāmaveda* hymn names like *Ṛtīyakrauñca* (the third crane).¹⁹ I suggest that Brahmins found affinities between human and bird and considered it productive or rewarding to explore the complexities of their relations by “transcend(ing) the confines of self and species.”²⁰

Most theorists reckon that such ways of envisioning the self (human) and the other (animal) are ultimately self-referential or anthropocentric because we humans are hopelessly solipsistic.²¹ Karla Armbruster writes: “this desire [*to know the other*] is sometimes almost completely overshadowed by or absorbed back into the human tendency to gaze—whether lovingly or critically—at our own reflection when we look at other animals (or, more properly, to hear our own voices when we listen to them).”²² But did Ṛgvedic poets only want to hear their own voices when stating that the omen-bird “recites at the pressings” and “sings at the *sāmans*”? Why bring

¹⁸ Jacques Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I am*, ed. by Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. by Davis Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 157. The latter half of this quotation cites Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, German edition edited by Thomas Rentsch (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2001), 209.

¹⁹ Frits Staal, “Mantras and Bird Songs,” 557.

²⁰ Lorraine Daston and Gregg Mitman, “Introduction: The How and Why of Thinking with Animals,” *Thinking with Animals*, 7.

²¹ Daston and Mitman write, “(w)hen humans imagine animals, we necessarily reimagine ourselves.” *Ibid.*, 6.

²² Karla Armbruster, “What Do We Want from Talking Animals? Reflections on Literary Representations of Animal Voices and Minds,” in *Speaking for Animals*, 19. [My clarification in brackets.]

omen-birds into the matter if there already were human *udgātṛs* for recitation at the *soma* pressings?

One analogical explanation derives from some bird species' capacities for speech mimesis, akin to Brahmin pundits' abilities to memorize and reproduce lengths of texts in recitation. In this case, the Brahmin-bird transposition concerns a unified idea of "Brahmin/bird" as transmitter of a message; tradition requires a transmitter for religious texts such as the Vedas, without needing a creator once the hymns, *sūtras*, and other liturgical texts are in existence. Dähnhardt has identified this resonance between humans and birds for the Indian traditions as the "capacity of some species to communicate their knowledge through the use of an articulate voice, singing sweet songs, chirping melodious tunes or even utter[ing] words pertaining to the human language. There derives the idea that birds are indeed both sources of wisdom and transmitters of secret messages."²³ This sort of explanation may be sufficient to justify Brahmins' frequent transposition of themselves onto or into birds. But I posit that the "zoopoetics"²⁴ present in religious literature and fables from the subcontinent merits more reflection. Brahmins do not simply talk about themselves when they transpose ideas about themselves onto birds, nor do they simply want to hear their own voices or project Vedically-ideal human qualities of mimicry (of which birds offer fine examples) back onto themselves by their use of avian names.

The relationship does not resolve so easily into this sort of two-directional motion. That is to say, one cannot reduce the phenomenon to two situations: Brahmins observe bird mimesis,

²³ Thomas Dähnhardt, "Winged Messengers, Feathered Beauties and Beaks of Divine Wisdom: The Role of Birds in Hindi-Urdu Allegorical Love Stories," in *Charming Beauties and Frightful Beasts*, 173.

²⁴ Derrida coined this term to describe the poetics, literary criticism, and analysis of texts such as Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*. Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I am*, 6.

which they appreciate, consequently projecting their own identity onto bird identities; or, Brahmins do the above, but afterwards reverse the direction of motion back onto themselves, giving themselves bird names or identities. At times, this inter-species phenomenon might be multi-directional and complex, what I describe as a *Brahmin-bird entanglement*.

One can perceive shared activities, a symbiosis between different species, and even Brahmin-bird equivalence in this delightful description from Bāṇa's *Kādambarī* of the hermitage of sages who hosted parrot chick Vaiśampāyana:

(T)he young Brahmins were eloquent in reciting the Vedas; the parrot-race was garrulous with the prayer of oblation that they learnt by hearing it incessantly; the subrahmaṇya was recited by many a maina (sic); the balls of rice offered to the deities were devoured by the cocks of the forest, and the offering of wild rice was eaten by the young kalahamsas of the tanks close by. The eating-places of the sages were protected from pollution by ashes cast round them. The fire for the munis' home sacrifice was fanned by the tails of their friends the peacocks....²⁵

In the first portion, parrots only imitate, as theorists like Dähnhardt have described bird behavior. But then, the mynah assumes the Brahmin's role in chanting, which is already a transposition. Further, the jungle fowl and *kalahamsa* geese, whose name indicates that they have a melodious or soft voice (*kala*), benefit in a symbiotic relationship with the Brahmanical sages: the residents of the hermitage fulfill their obligations and satisfy the gods with the *piṇḍa* ball and rice offerings, and the birds receive food. As counterpoint, other birds help maintain the sacred fires, which benefits humans directly (and gods, indirectly). The passage tangles roles, mixes identities, and forces readers to consider bird-human relations contextually within a complex system. While one can call it transposition when the mynahs chant the *subrahmaṇya*, it is not correct to

²⁵ *The Kādambarī of Bāṇa*, trans. by C. M. Ridding (New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1974), 39.

say that Bāṇa transposes or asks readers to transpose Brahmins and birds mentally. A better way to describe the phenomenon is what new materialist Karen Barad calls “entanglement.”²⁶

The interdisciplinary turn toward new materialism does not reject earlier incarnations of materialism. Simplifying blatantly, new materialists work from the first principle that one cannot isolate matter from other components of the universe such as mind, or rather, that one cannot consider elements such as mind or emotion as separate from matter.²⁷ The mind is, in fact, indivisible from matter, so rationalist, humanist, dualist attempts at fashioning a dialectic such as mind vs. matter, reason vs. emotion, or rationality vs. animality offer extremely limited scope for understanding our world. New materialism as a new metaphysics encompasses research in fields ranging from quantum physics (Barad’s primary area) to the arts and offers new models from which to consider topics such as sexual differing and subjectivity. On the topic of subject and object, or human “subject” and non-human “other,” Barad explains, “(i)nstead of there being a separation of subject and object, there is an entanglement of subject and object.”²⁸

Bāṇa plays with this throughout *Kādambarī* by injecting subjectivity as well as objecthood into the parrot narrator, Vaiśampāyana. Critics might argue that a simple narrator does not have much subjectivity in an account. After all, dualists say, narration is recounting an event, typically an event that is the experience of others, and it does not require much agency or deter-

²⁶ Barad, “Matter feels, converses,...” Ch. 1.3 in *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies*.

²⁷ “New materialism shows how the mind is always already material (the mind is an idea of the body), how matter is necessarily something of the mind (the mind has the body as its object)... New materialism opposes the transcendental and humanist (dualist) traditions that are haunting cultural theory, standing on the brink of both the modern and the post-postmodern era. The transcendental and humanist traditions, which are manifold yet consistently predicated on dualist structures, continue to stir debates that are being opened up by new materialists. What can be labelled “new materialism” shifts these dualist structures by allowing for the conceptualization of the travelling of the fluxes of nature and culture, matter and mind, and opening up active theory formation.” Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

mination. Seen this way, the process of narration is akin to recitation, imitation, or mimesis. But Vaiśampāyana, while a narrator, is one of various protagonists of his own sub-narrative that occupies the vast majority of the novel; in addition, he is a primary actor in the macro-narrative surrounding the story that he tells. Parrot Vaiśampāyana shares his own life story, his autobiography, describing the destruction of his family and home and his adventures in finding a new home with sage Jābāli and ascetics. The bird also involves himself through speech and act in other episodes of the story that he tells. Finally, the macro-narrative concerning the Caṇḍāla princess, the king, and others also involves Vaiśampāyana. It is in this macro-narrative frame story where the parrot appears before the king to tell his story.

The plot is so convoluted it requires a synopsis here. In the larger tale, Vaiśampāyana was born as a parrot as a result of his (human) father's curse. In a past life, Vaiśampāyana was really a human sage, Puṇḍarīka, who had fallen in love with Mahāśvetā in a dual love story that is the macro-narrative. After being reborn as a bird, he can only attain release from this curse upon completion of a lengthy series of ascetic performances and after revealing the king's true identity to him (the king was also a separated lover in his past life, the second part of the dual love story). After the bird's revelation, which is his sub-narrative, both couples reunite in their love, or rather, they do in their next lives. The parrot, as parrot and *not* human, is an actor in all three encapsulated stories, in his own micro-autobiography, in the sub-narrative he tells throughout most of the book, and in the larger frame story.

This description supports my argument proposing the parrot's subjectivity, despite his being a narrator, but the parrot is also an object. The Caṇḍāla girl brings him before the king purportedly for entertainment and delight, he is the recipient of the curse, and the Śabara leader ab-

jectly ignores him in an episode to which I will return later. Ultimately, he is not the main character (Kādambarī is), hence most things happen around him and not to or because of him, granting him “wall-flower” status for much of the lengthy work. Varying the degrees of subjectivity and objecthood, Bāṇa writes subjectivity into his novel as rather more entangled than a purely dualistic subject/object dichotomy. For compositions like this, Barad’s discussion of agency and being an actor is enlightening: “agency is an **enactment**, a matter of possibilities for reconfiguring entanglements. So agency does **not involve choice** in any liberal humanist sense; rather, it is about the possibilities and **accountability entailed in reconfiguring material-discursive apparatuses of bodily production**, including the boundary **articulations and exclusions** that are marked by those **practices**.”²⁹ Barad’s discourse is complex, so I will trace her ideas and lexicon using the character of Vaiśampāyana and the “parrot-race” more broadly, as Bāṇa presents them.

Vaiśampāyana **enacts** his involvement, although he **rarely chooses** what he does in the narrative; he is more of a victim of fate at Bāṇa’s whim. As Barad signals, deterministic choice is not necessary for agency, which traditional thinkers envision as causing actions and reactions. Vaiśampāyana’s **material-discursive apparatuses** include his story-telling abilities that are key in reuniting lovers and his discourse in itself, which in this case makes the characters remember their lost loves and initiates their transcendence into the next life reunited. His apparatuses also include a few more purely material elements, of which his organs of speech are the most remarkable for my discussion. His voice, determined by structures of a material nature, is crucial to his

²⁹ Barad, “Matter feels, converses,...” Ch. 1.3 in *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies*. I have used bold text to highlight concepts that I address in my following discussion of Bāṇa’s text and Brahmanical practices.

ability in song and to the sweetness of his intonation in poetry recitation and so on.³⁰ According to Barad, the parrot has agency in his **enactment** (or performance) of song and story-telling due to the material-discursive apparatuses he has available, as **produced by and in his body**.

While Vaiśampāyana has a larger role in the book, my earlier example of the “parrot-race” can illustrate the same ideas from Barad. Bāṇa writes that the parrots recited a prayer “that they learnt by hearing it incessantly.” For Barad and other new materialist thinkers, it is almost irrelevant if the parrots choose to recite or simply imitate Brahmin priests because of their nature. Their recitation is a **practice** that they **articulate through bodily productions**, using the **material-discursive apparatuses** they have available. Thus, as Barad theorizes and I argue, they are agents of their recitations.

In effect, a Brahmin priest typically carries out the same expression: the recitation of prayers is a repetitive **practice articulated through bodily productions**, including chanting, gesturing of hands, and bodily movement. Brahmanical ritual is indeed a fine example of an **enactment that articulates boundaries as well as excludes** certain spaces, objects, and people from that practice. Thus, the transposition from Brahmin to bird in Vaiśampāyana’s rebirth from his past life as human Puṇḍarīka might not be such a stretch, nor would the opposite, from bird, as member of the “parrot-race” or as Vedic *śakuni*, to Brahmanical reciter. Nor is it so difficult to conceive of Brahmin-bird entanglements like the *Mahābhārata*’s Śuka (is he a Brahmin-bird or bird who is Brahmin?). In fact, I suggest that Brahmin-bird entanglements reach such an extent that certain areas of Brahmanical identity may have become fused with avian notions, particularly evident in Brahmanical, Vedic, and sages’ names.

³⁰ *The Kādambarī of Bāṇa*, trans. by C. M. Ridding, 10-11.

What's in a Name?

A whole range of Brahmanical ascetic denominations derive from animal names. Such categorical names must have originated largely as metaphorical epithets for ascetics, but reflect the practices that animals perform using their material-discursive apparatuses of bodily production. These ascetics also purportedly practiced these same enactments, explaining the carry-over of names. Such names for bird-Brahmins include *paramahaṃsa*, a “goose” sort of holy person who is discriminating to the highest degree and *kāpotī* or *kāpotā*, a term for a hermit or holy householder who gleaned cereals using only two fingers like a beak, eating each grain individually as a pigeon would.³¹

There are more bird names in Sāmavedic hymns, such as the *Vāṇnidhanakrauñca Sāman*, “a *krauñca* (crane) melody ‘ending in speech,’” according to Frits Staal, as well as the *plava* (an aquatic bird) *sāman*, the *vāśa* (a noisy bird) *sāman*, and the *bhāsa* (a bird of prey) *sāman*.³² Vedic associations with birds occur, further, in modern performances of the *atirātra* rite, for which Brahmins prepare the *agnicayana vedi* (altar) in the shape of a bird, probably a *śyena*, the falcon associated with *soma*.³³

The entanglement has yet more knots, however, as some Vedic lineages have appropriated avian associations for their *śākhā* (branch) names. *Taittirīya* is a case in point. *Taittirīya* is an adjectival derivative (a *taddhita* formed with *ṛddhi*) from the base word *tittiri*, a Sanskrit word

³¹ Patrick Olivelle, “The Beast and the Ascetic: The Wild in the Indian Religious Imagination,” in *Ascetics and Brahmins: Studies in Ideologies and Institutions* (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2006), 98.

³² Staal, “Mantras and Bird Songs,” 557.

³³ Frits Staal, C. V. Somayajipad, M. Itti Ravi Nambudiri, and Adelaide De Menil, *AGNI: The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar, I-II* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1983).

for partridge. Opinions concerning the origins of this lineage's name have aired over the millennia. In fact, the etiology of the name for this Brahmanical clan and set of texts has resulted in various rich tales concerning many *tittiris* or one *tittira* (in Pāli), which I analyze below.

Pāṇini voices possibly the earliest (ca. fourth century BCE) extant opinion regarding the name and origin of *Taittirīya* in his *sūtra* 4.3.102, which specifies that the *chan* affix (-ya) carries the meaning of “proclaimed by X,” for *taittirīya* and similar words and clarifies that the *Taittirīyas* are “those who learn the Veda enounced by Tittiri [partridge or person with name Partridge].”³⁴ This *sūtra* occurs immediately after Pāṇini *sūtra* 4.3.101 explaining the general rule for the -īya *taddhita pratyaya* (suffix), confirming that the suffix is for someone who studies the text *proclaimed by Tittiri* and not someone descended from *Tittiri* (a hypothetical person).³⁵ This indicates that at least at the time of Pāṇini, tradition held that the *Taittirīyas* did not have this name because of some historical figure or clan leader named Tittiri. Pāṇini makes clear that this was not a patronymic.³⁶ These texts for study and recitation are simply named after a bird, no more and no less. *Taittirīya* is a textual designation and not an ethnic or familial one. In the twentieth century, D. D. Kosambi suggested *Taittirīya* was a totemic clan name with the partridge as the clan's emblem.³⁷ This idea does not agree with what Pāṇini expresses in the grammar tradi-

³⁴ *The Aṣṭādhyāyī of Pāṇini*, trans. by Śrīśa Candra Vāsu, vol. 4, 785. Internet Archive e-book. Accessed Oct. 31, 2014. <https://archive.org/stream/ashtadhyayi/ashtadhyayi4#page/n0/mode/2up>. My clarification in square brackets.

³⁵ *Taittirīya-upaniṣad: avec le commentaire de Śaṅkara*, translation, notes, and appendixes by Michel Angot, commentary by Śaṅkarācārya, vol. 1. *Introduction, texte et traditions* (Paris: Collège de France, Publications de l'Institut de Civilisation Indienne, Diffusion de Boccard, 2007), 46, footnote 53. *Īyākaraṇamahābhāṣya of Patañjali with the Commentary (Bhāṣyapradīpa) of Kaiyaṣa Upādhyāya and the Supercommentary (Bhāṣyapradīpodyota) of Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa*, vol. 4, *Taddhitapratyayas*, edited with notes and variants by M. M. Pandit Shivdatta Sharma (Delhi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, 1988), 214-215. *The Aṣṭādhyāyī of Pāṇini*, vol. 4, trans. by Vāsu, 784-5.

³⁶ Ibid. The section Pāṇini dedicates to patronymics is in verses 4.1.92-178.

³⁷ Staal, “Mantras and Bird Songs,” 557.

tion, but there does not seem to be any actual evidence to reject Kosambi's interpretation outright.

Another explanation of the Taittirīyas' name appears in the *Anukramaṇī* of the Black *Yajus*, which informs that "Vaiśampāyana taught it to Yāska, who taught it to Taittiri, who became a teacher."³⁸ In this etiology, the derivative (*Taittirīya*) apparently forms from a teacher named Taittiri (thus already a *vṛddhi* derived from *tittiri*, partridge) and not from a person or animal named Tittiri. This theory does not disagree with the Paninian grammar tradition, but the *Anukramaṇī* does not change matters much, because a teacher named Taittiri got his name from a partridge in the first place.

Taittirīyakas, those belonging to the Taittirīya lineage, had and have their own interpretations, and certainly treat both the textual tradition and lineage as clan-based. Bhaṭṭa Bhāskara Miśra, a ca. twelfth-century CE commentator of the whole Taittirīya branch including *Āraṇyaka*, *Veda*, and *Upaniṣad*, is likely to have belonged to the clan himself. He claims that this *Veda* was seen by the *muni* Tittiri and his family.³⁹ According to this commentator, the Taittirīya textual school would have taken this sage Tittiri as an ancestor for the lineage. Hence by medieval times, the tradition has acquired some ethnic or ancestral associations for its name's origins. Further, this etiology has now distanced itself from Pāṇini's non-patronymic definition for *Taittirīya*.

There are two further stories that resonate with the Puranic partridge Taittirīya tales that I will present immediately below. One version from the *Mahābhārata* is not an etiological tale for

³⁸ *The Viṣṇu-Purāṇa: A System of Hindu Mythology and Tradition*, edited and trans. by H. H. Wilson, edited and revised by K. L. Joshi (Delhi: Parimal Publications, 1972), 240, footnote 3.

³⁹ *Taittirīya-upaniṣad*, Angot, 46.

the partridge (*tittiri*) at all, but has similarities to all of the other stories in my discussion. The other is a Pāli canon *Jātaka* story, the *Tittirajātaka*. This tale also shares enough affinity with the Puranic *Taittirīya* partridge stories for inclusion here, which is surprising since it is Buddhist and not a Brahmanical story. Commonalities to consider in these tales, while not appearing in every story variant, include 1.) names (*Vaiśampāyana*), 2.) a Heideggerian or Derridean transposition from human to bird, 3.) the physical regurgitation of Vedic texts, and 4.) the notion of either partridge or parrot retaining or salvaging pieces of knowledge, through which the tradition in question is able to continue and flourish.

Etiological Story Cousins

A.) *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*

I call all of these stories etiologies: explanations of why things are the way they are or why something has the name it has. But from the perspective of the Puranic tradition, these stories are also euhemerisms, interpretations of myth as traditional accounts of historical persons and events. Viewed within the tradition, these stories, like much of the *Purāṇas*, are also historiography. In all excerpts, I have used bold text for words or phrases of particular importance for my analysis (appearing in the following section), and I have made clarifications in parentheses.

...It had been formerly agreed by the Munis, that any one of them who, at a certain time, did not join an assembly held on mount Meru should incur the guilt of **killing a Brāhmaṇa**, within a period of seven nights. **Vaiśampāyana** (the *guru*) alone failed to keep the appointment (**the meeting on Mount Meru**) and consequently **killed**, by an accidental kick with his foot, the child of his sister. He then addressed his scholars (students) and desired them to perform the **penance** expiatory of **Brahmanicide** on his behalf. Without any hesitation Yājñavalkya refused and said, ‘How shall I engage in penance with these **miserable and inefficient Brāhmaṇas** (Brahmins)?’ On which his Guru, being incensed, commanded him to relinquish all that he had learnt from him. ‘You speak contemptuously,’ he observed ‘of these young Brāhmaṇas, but of what use is a disciple who disobeys my commands?’

‘I spoke,’ replied Yājñavalkya, ‘in perfect faith; but as to what I have read (learnt) from you, I have had enough: it is no more than this’— [acting as if he would eject it from his stomach]; when **he brought up the texts of the Yajus** in substance stained with blood. He then depart-

ed. The other scholars (students) of Vaiśampāyana, **transforming themselves to partridges (tittiri), picked up the texts** which he had disgorged and which from that circumstance were called Taittirīya; and the disciples were called the Caraka professors of the *Yajus*, from *Carana*, ‘going through’ or ‘**performing**’ the expiatory rites enjoined by their master...⁴⁰

B.) *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*

This etiology remarks especially on one feature of the transmission of this part of the *Vedas*—the Taittirīya portions—namely, that these are beautiful, *supeśalāḥ*. This suggests to me that the *Taittirīya* is beautiful because it is like birdsong or because of its avian nature. Michel Angot also comments on the especially lyrical and beautiful quality of the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, above and beyond that which is typical of a philosophical text like an *Upaniṣad*. In his analysis of this work, Angot emphasizes the lyrical and songlike aspect of the *Taittirīya*, an aspect that does not receive much attention as the traditional priority typically is to analyze the text’s Vedantic philosophical content.⁴¹

It is traditionally reported that **Vaiśampāyana** had pupils called *Carakādhvaryus*. For the sake of their preceptor, they performed a **penance** in expiation of the sin of **Brahmahatyā** (killing a *Brāhmaṇa*).

One of his disciples, Yājñavalkya, remarked (to Vaiśampāyana), ‘O worshipful Sir, what amount of reward can be gained through the **poor** performance of penance **by these weak-lings**? I alone can undergo such **austere penance** as will be extremely difficult for others to perform.’

When [boastfully] addressed thus, the preceptor (Vaiśampāyana) got offended. He [peremptorily] ordered, ‘Get out. Enough of a pupil like you who contemptuously speak of Brāhmaṇa sages. Give up at once whatever you have learnt from me.’

Thereupon, the son of Devarāta (Yājñavalkya) on his part immediately **vomited out the collection** of *Yajurveda* passages and left the place. And the sages saw the collection of the *Yajurveda* texts.

⁴⁰ *The Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*, 238-239. Bk. 3, ch. 5, verses 3-13. *śiṣyaḥ paramadharmajño guruvṛttiparah sadā | ṛṣīryo ‘dya mahāmeroḥ samāje nāgamiṣyati || 3 || tasya vai saptarātrāstu brahmahatyā bhaviṣyati | pūrvamevaṃ muniguṇaiḥ samayo ‘bhūt kṛto dvijā || 4 || vaiśampāyana ekastu taṃ vyatīkrāntavāṃstadā | svastrīyaṃ bālakaṃ so ‘tha padāsprṣtamadyātayat || 5 || śiṣyānāḥ sa bhoḥ śiṣyā! brahmahatyāpaham vratam | caradhvaṃ matkrte sarve na vicāryamidaṃ tathā || 6 || athāḥa yājñavalkyastu kimebhirbhagavan! dvijaiḥ | kleśitairalpatejobhiścariṣye ‘hamidaṃ vratam || 7 || tataḥ kruddho guruḥ prāḥa yājñavalkyaṃ mahāmatih | mucyatām yat tvayādhūtaṃ matto viprāvamānaka || 8 || nistejaso vadasyenān yastvaṃ brāhmaṇapuṅgavān | tena śiṣyeṇa nārtho ‘sti mamājñābhaṅgākāriṇā || 9 || yājñavalkyastataḥ prāḥa bhaktyaitatte mayoditam | mamāpyalaṃ tvayādhūtaṃ yanmayā tadidaṃ dvijā || 10 || parāśara uvāca: ityukto rudhirāktāni sarūpāni yajūṃṣi saḥ | chardayitvā dadau tasmai yayau sa sveccayā munih || 11 || yajūṃṣyatha visṛṣṭāni yājñavalkyena vai dvija ! | jagṛhustittirā bhūtvā taittirīyāstu te tataḥ || 12 || brahmahatyāvratam cīrṇaṃ guruṇā coditaistu yaiḥ | carakādhvaryavaste tu caraṇānmunisattam || 13 ||*

⁴¹ See in particular *Taittirīya-upaniṣad*, Angot, part D, “Cantilation et tonalité,” 231-292.

(T)he sages were so enamored of it they **assumed the form of *Tittira* birds [francoline partridges] and collected it**. Hence the **beautiful (*supēśālāḥ*)** branches of the *Yajurveda* came to be known as *Taittirīyas*.⁴²

C.) *Mahābhārata* excerpt

This tale makes use of a trope involving the bird that is frequent in both Brahmanical and Buddhist traditions—the metaphor of the release from fetters and of rebirth, which I discuss in the following section as well. It is not surprising that a bird is the emblem of release here, as this portion of the *Mahābhārata* is the section on the *dharma* of final release (the *mokṣadharmā* section of the *Śāntiparvan* [book 12:168-353]).

Vyāsa performed intense **austerities** and petitioned Śiva on the **peak of Mount Meru** for a son; Śiva granted his wish, promising him a son who would be as pure as the elements, and who would win fame for his spiritual accomplishments. After obtaining this boon, Vyāsa was one day rubbing two firesticks when the Apsaras Ghṛtācī appeared; her beauty aroused uncontrollable desire in him. Taking the form of a female parrot, she approached him as he tried to make fire, and his seed gushed forth and fell on one of the firesticks. As he continued to rub, **Śuka (= Parrot)** was born from that stick, blazing bright like a sacrificial fire. Gaṅgā came in her own form to Meru's peak to bathe him; all the celestials came, and **Śiva invested him with the sacred thread**. The Vedas presented themselves to him as soon as he was born, and he chose Bṛhaspati to be his guru. Taking no interest in the first three stages of life, he directed his mind towards **release**...

Śuka returned to his father's hermitage there, travelling through the air, radiant as the sun, and told Vyāsa what Janaka had said. He then joined Vyāsa's four existing disciples. Once these five appealed to Vyāsa to take no sixth disciple, and to **let the dissemination of the Veda be their task**... Vyāsa remained with his son, meditating in silence. Nārada saw him there; he complained that **the sound of the Vedas was no longer heard**, and told him he should **resume recitation**. **Vyāsa now recited with his son. One day a terrible wind began to blow, and Vyāsa told his son to stop reciting; he explained that the wind was a portent indicating that the recitation should cease**,... Śuka considered how he might avoid attachment and rebirth, and resolved to make use of Yoga to abandon his body and enter the Sun. He **flew** up from the mountain-top into the sky; all creatures beheld him traveling towards the Sun with fully focused mind, and the seers and celestials praised him greatly.⁴³

⁴² *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, text with English translation, notes and index by Manmatha Nath Dutt, with an introduction and edited by Dr. Pushpendra Kumar (Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers, 2009), 1422. Part 3, *Skandha* 12, ch. 6, verses 61-65. *vaiśampāyanaśiṣyā via carakādhvaryavo 'bhavan | yacerurbrahmahatyāmhaḥkṣaraṇaṃ svagurorvratam || 61 || yājñavalkyaśca tacchiṣya āhāho bhagavan kiyat | caritenālpasārāṇām cariṣye 'haṃ suduścaram || 62 || ityukto gururapyāha kupīto yāhyalam tvayā | viprāvamāntrā śiṣyeṇa madadhītāṃ tyajāśviti || 63 || devarārasutaḥ so 'pi ccharditvā yajuṣāṃ guṇam | tato gate 'tha munayo dadrśustānyajurgaṇān || 64 || yajūṃṣi tittirā bhūtā tallolupatayā 'daduḥ | taittirīyā iti yajuḥśākhā āsan supeśālāḥ || 65 ||*

⁴³ *Mahābhārata*, abridged and translated by John D. Smith (New York: Penguin Classics, 2009), *Śāntiparvan* (12.311-319), 658-9.

D.) *Tittirajāataka* (“Partridge Pundit’s Tale”)

While this story appears in the Buddhist context of the Pāli *Jātaka* tales, it contains the skeletal framework of the Brahmanical tale from above. Scholars of Buddhist literature consider that the verse portions of the *Jātakas* are the earliest layer of Buddhist canonical material contained in the *Jātakas*, and that the narrator(s) later attached the prose sections that ultimately became fixed or canonical.⁴⁴ Richard Salomon and Timothy Lenz theorize that this process of building from a skeleton was at work for much early Indic literature, in which verse portions of texts are skeletons that serve as mnemonic devices around which to embellish larger stories in oral narration.⁴⁵ In this sort of oral process, early verses are generally preserved intact, while the larger prose story may vary over time with different narrators. In the portion of the story in question, a partridge instructs young Brahmin boys; one could imagine such a narrative to pre-exist the Buddhist narration. After all, virtually all of the *Jātakas* contain narration in the present (*pac-cuppannavatthu*) and then the embedded “story of the past” (*atītavattthu*).⁴⁶ On occasion, the stories resonate with the literary history of the *Mahābhārata* or the *Rāmāyaṇa*, so Buddhist compilers evidently sourced earlier material from the Brahmanical tradition. Yet, what one might imagine to be the earlier portion of this story, which is overtly Brahmanical in content, has no verse.

⁴⁴ *Ākhyāna* is the term that designates literature with fixed verse, around which the narrator embellishes the looser prose narrative. Oskar von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāli Literature* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, Pvt. Ltd., 1996), 57.

⁴⁵ Oskar von Hinüber, review, “A New Version of the *Gāndhārī Dharmapada* and a Collection of Previous-Birth Stories: British Library *Kharoṣṭhī* Fragments 16+25 by Timothy Lenz, Andrew Glass, Bhikshu Dharmamitra,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 124.4 (Oct.-Dec., 2004): 804. See also Oskar von Hinüber, review, “Ancient Buddhist Scrolls from Gandhāra: The British Library *Kharoṣṭhī* Fragments,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 121.3 (July 2001): 521.

⁴⁶ Von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāli Literature*, 56.

Unexpectedly, the latter portion of the tale, in which the partridge teaches the *dhamma* to the lion and tiger, is more Buddhist in tone and contains all the verses.

Following the standard scholarly interpretation of textual history, then, the latter portion of this story, containing the verse and strongly Buddhist in morals, would still pertain to the earlier stratum of *Jātaka* material when conceiving of the corpus more broadly. Interestingly, the final verses closing the tale do retain the narrative elements of the partridge and his violent end from the first half of the story, so there is cohesion from beginning to end. The fact that the verses maintain the same story trend as the prose portions do indicates that the tale might retain similar form and content from its earliest times as part of the Pāli corpus. Otherwise, if the prose narrative had transformed over time from an earlier period of recitation, one would not expect to see so much continuity between the verses and the prose, especially since some of the narrative content had a vastly different source (Brahmanical). An attempt at attributing some material to an earlier stratum than other material is not solely for the purpose of determining “Which came first? The Brahmin or the Buddhist (story)?” It can be a valuable method to locate, contextualize, and align story traditions in Indian literary history, a discipline in which chronology is uncertain and accurate dating often perilous or impossible.

When reading, it is also noteworthy that this Buddhist tale presents a critique of the Brahmin boys as “snivelly.” At first glance, this seems to be another element of Buddhist satirical humor present in the *Jātakas* that I discuss below as well as a particularly Brahmanical critique. However, a similar comment appears in both Puranic versions, where one would not expect to find such criticism (cf. “these miserable and inefficient Brāhmaṇas” [*Viṣṇu Purāṇa*] and “the poor performance of penance by these weaklings” [*Bhāgavata Purāṇa*]). Finally, while this

tale seems to me to refer to the Taittirīya etiology, Ernst Windisch wrote in passing that this story made one recall the Maitrāyaṇīya school of the black *Yajurveda*, which had a close relationship with Buddhism.⁴⁷

“Partridge Pundit’s Tale” (my translation, see *Appendix A* for *Pāli* text)

A long time ago, when Brahmadatta was ruling in Benares, there was a teacher who was famous all the world around teaching the art of knowledge to five hundred young Brahmin men, (....)

....There also was a partridge living there as his permanent dwelling. **This partridge**, having heard the teacher teach all the men to recite the mantras, **had grasped all of the three Vedas**. The men became very friendly with this (bird).

After a while, the teacher’s time had come, even though the young men had not really obtained perfect completion (of their Vedic study). The young men incinerated the teacher’s corpse, prepared a *stūpa* of sand, revered (him) with a bounty of flower blossoms, and **wept and lamented**.

Now then, Partridge asked them: “**Why do you all cry so?**” They said, “Our teacher died when our (śāstric) knowledge was still not completed! That’s why we cry!”

“Do not worry (your) peace of mind like this! I will teach you to recite this śāstric art.”

“How do you know it?”

“I listened when the teacher was instructing you. Just so I have learnt the three Vedas fully by heart.”

“Then please do teach us the full knowledge yourself!”

Partridge said, “Then do listen.” He expounded to them (on the Veda) like one releasing a river from the summit of a mountain, even the bits which were gnarly and knotty (in difficulty).

The young men became thrilled and delighted in the presence of Partridge Pundit and progressed in their śāstric art.

What’s more, this partridge then stood as a teacher who was famous in the four corners (of the world) as he taught (this) art to them.

The young men made for him a beautiful cage and they tied it with stretched canopies on top. They offered him sweet grain and such things on a beautiful salver. They revered him with blossoms of every color (and) they paid (him) great honor.

⁴⁷ Ernst Windisch, “*Das Tittirajātaka Nr. 438*,” in *Kleine Schriften*, writings of Ernst Windisch edited by Karin Steiner and Jorg Gengnagel (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2001), 538.

So they say that the partridge recited the mantras to five hundred young men striving (to learn) in the forest; and this became well-known on the whole isle of Jambu (India)...⁴⁸

The tale continues with a bad ascetic (*duṭṭhatāpasa* = *duḥsthatāpasa* [Skt.]) killing, roasting, and eating Partridge Pundit. Through Partridge's friend the Lizard, the Lion and Tiger, two non-human disciples of the partridge, come to learn of the partridge's murder. After a sort of trial, with the evidence of the dead partridge's feathers in the bad ascetic's dreadlocks (*tassa jāṭantare tittirapaṇḍitassa lomāni paññāyanti*),⁴⁹ the felines convict the murderer and kill him for his evil deed.

Common Traces, Common Shadows

The multiplicity of common elements in these stories suggests conversations and allusions within the same tradition and between Brahmanical and Buddhist traditions. The name Vaiśampāyana appears in every rendition except the Buddhist version. The bird in the *Mahābhārata* is not Vaiśampāyana (Śuka is the bird), but another principal narrator of the *Mahābhārata* in fact has the same name. Vaiśampāyana reappears as well in *Kādambarī* as both parrot and narrator. All of these stories except the *Mahābhārata* contain criticism of penance, *tapas*, asceticism, and the like, and in particular they critique the performance of these practices by inept practitioners or deliberately malicious ascetics. In the latter part of each episode, this contrasts with the bird or birds' fine assimilation and recitation of the sacred texts, except for the *Jātaka*,

⁴⁸ *Tittirajātaka*, my translation from Pāli. *The Jātaka Together with its Commentary, Being Tales of the Anterior Births of Gotama Buddha*, Vol. 3, Pāli edition by V. Fausbøll (London: The Pali Text Society by Luzac & Co., Ltd., 1963). The entire story, 536-543; this excerpt, 536-8. For the text in Pāli, see appendix. My discussion of this tale continues below.

⁴⁹ "The feathers and skin of Partridge Pundit were apparent amongst the dreadlocks of this one (the bad ascetic)." [my trans.] *Tittirajātaka*, *The Jātaka*, Pāli edition, 539-540. The final verse in the story concerns this evidence to convict the evil ascetic: *tāni 'ssa kammāyatanāni assuṃ purisassa vattisamodhānatāya | yathā ayam dissati lomapiṇḍo gāvo hatā, kiṃ pana daddarassā 'ti* || Ibid., 542. "These are indeed the levels of his deeds, and this, the man's assortment of behavior! Since the cow is dead and these lumps of hair (feathers) are visible, what then of Partridge Pundit!?" [my trans.]

which, reversing the trend, begins with the bird's fine recitation of sacred texts and closes with the critique of the ascetic's poor religious observances.

Why is a bird, either partridge or parrot, the narrator or reciter of these texts? Birds such as the parrot have been valued in pre-modern Indian textual traditions due to their capacity for mimesis, their ability to articulate in human languages, and their cognitive grasp of syntax and other complex aspects of language, such as correct usage of verbal conjugations using past, present, and future tense.⁵⁰ I have also discussed why and how mimicry and correct repetition were such value-laden qualities in religious contexts that preserved their most important texts via oral transmission. These abilities and values certainly explain the prominence of the parrot in Indian literature, evident here in the examples from the *Mahābhārata* and *Kādambarī*, or elsewhere in the case of parrot Śuka who narrates the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.

An explanation for the partridge's prominence is harder to theorize, but I hypothesize this bird's selection for the *Taittirīya* texts in part because this subfamily of aves has a particularly melodic, piercing call and a variety of calls in regular use.⁵¹ In addition to vocal capacities, the partridge is a low-standing ground fowl and thus ideal for picking up bits of food from the ground (or collecting pieces of a text) with his or her beak. Moreover, this bird's habitat—plains, open cultivated fields, and areas with low trees and scrub—puts the animal in closer contact with humans than other birds, such as those living in jungle canopies. This means that humans can observe how partridges, a ground-nesting subfamily, feed their young more easily than we can

⁵⁰ DeMello, *Speaking for Animals*, 6.

⁵¹ "Sounds," Pheasants and Partridges: Grey Francolin (*Francolinus pondicerianus*), recordings from India, *The Internet Bird Collection*, accessed October 10, 2014, <http://ibc.lynxeds.com/species/grey-francolin-francolinus-pondicerianus>.

with birds of prey or small avians that nest high in trees. Swallowing something up and regurgitating on demand for offsprings' survival is a bodily practice of many birds, but it is one we observe best at eye or ground level.

Thus, humans on the subcontinent may have analogized this bird's food consumption behaviors to human textual assimilation, as well as the reverse process, linking the regurgitation of food to the recitation and teaching of texts. Within a cultural milieu that highly valued the oral assimilation of works and rightfully feared any potential detriment to the retention of texts or to the reciters, the partridge's bodily practices were desirable. Earlier I noted the renunciate tradition's analogy of avian food consumptive practices to ideal human religious practices in my discussion of the *kapotā* (pigeon) ascetics. Therefore, the observation of avian behavior with regard to food and the extrapolation of avian dietary bodily practices to religion already has a precedent in Indian contexts.

I posit that an underlying inspiration for and theme of these stories, regardless of the links to the *Taittirīya* lineage, may have been the fear of potentially losing reciters who were valuable members of society. This extends to anxieties over potential ruptures in the textual or recitation tradition. The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* directly references this anxiety in the passage that directly follows the excerpt above: “Yājñavalkya, (was) ...anxious to recover possession of the texts of the Yajus...”⁵² Other stories hint at anxiety or rupture via the mention of Brahmanicide (*brahmahatyā*) (in both the *Viṣṇu* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇas*), the guru's fault in missing an important meeting (*Viṣṇu Purāṇa*), and the death of the guru, potentially marking a break in the tradition (*Tittirajātaka*). In the *Mahābhārata* story, the break in recitation is due to an inauspicious wind, so it is a

⁵² *The Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*, 239.

deliberate rupture in recitation that *dharmaśāstra* ordains, but even before this break, Nārada is nervous because of the silence and lack of chanting.

No matter what the rupture’s source is in each instance, the composers of these stories imagine birds as agents who retain and save pieces of knowledge and subsequently preserve the lineage. Using Barad’s revised notion of agency, the bodily practices of these birds literally involve material or mechanical apparatuses but reformulate themselves in metaphorical discursive apparatuses for the regurgitation of tracts of text. Each of the etiological stories confers agency to the bird. The animal’s bodily production drives the agency, not the choice or deliberation that humanists typically ascribe to agency. This bodily production also occurs as a result of a transposition from human animal to non-human animal, at least in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*’s story, where the students transform themselves into partridges. In the *Jātaka* story, this sort of species shifting appears to be simply a narrative transposition of the role of *human* guru into *partridge* pundit without involving a metaphysical species shift. However, there is some suggestion that the partridge pundit either transposes into human form in the latter half of the story or may not be so bird-like throughout the entirety of the tale, implied in the narrator’s curious lexical way of describing the partridge’s “feathers.” These “feathers” found in the ascetic’s dreadlocks and incriminating his guilt are *lomāni* (stem *loma*),⁵³ a word that typically indicates hair and not feathers at all. The usual Pāli words for feather, *patta*, *piccha*, *piñcha*, and *piñja*, do all appear in other *Jātaka* stories,⁵⁴ so this word choice, which usually describes something mammalian if not human, is strange proof of the ascetic’s slaughter of *Tittira* Pundit. The first part of the story certainly iden-

⁵³ *Tittirajātaka*, *The Jātaka*, Pāli edition, *lomāni* and *lomapiṇḍo*, 540 and 542.

⁵⁴ In *Jātakas* 38, 207, 226, 443, and others. T. W. Rhys Davids and William Stede, editors, *The Pali Text Society’s Pali–English Dictionary*, Online edition (Chipstead: Pali Text Society, 1921–5), 406 and 457.

tifies the partridge as a partridge—the Brahmin students gift him a gold cage and sweet grain—but the more mammalian attributes in the second half of the tale might imply species blurring, if not transposition.

In fiction, “the difficulty which besets us when we attempt to transpose ourselves into an animal,”⁵⁵ as Heidegger envisioned it, is not so difficult at all. In *Kādambarī*, the transposition from human to animal and again into human occurs via a curse and rebirth; Puṇḍarīka (human) is reborn as Vaiśampāyana (parrot) and likewise, Vaiśampāyana reunites with his love in his next human birth. Beyond stories but still within the Brahmanical ideology of reincarnation, this also presents little difficulty. However, one can discern a paradigm shift separating the earlier, imaginative story tradition that embraces this transposition and the later (medieval and post-medieval) Taittirīya lineage, which might find such species shifting inconsistent or implausible. Hence, the later tradition attempts to resolve the transposition by explaining Tittiri as the name of the *human muni* who saw this portion of the *Veda*, according to Puranic tradition and the *Anukramanī*, or by explaining Taittiri as a *human* preceptor, as per the medieval commentarial tradition following Bhaṭṭa Bhāskara. Such a paradigm shift takes the animal out of the story. These groups, in line with Heidegger, struggle to explain the animal-human entanglement already established by this time in a way that is satisfactory for their needs and meanings.

Bird as Brahmin: Bird as Self, Bird as Other

Some traditions, however, *could* accept the entanglement and in fact promoted it in their texts. Bāṇabhaṭṭa embraced this entanglement and used it as a vehicle for humor, as in the passage in which the peacock friends fan the sacrificial fires and the mynahs sing the *subrahmanya*.

⁵⁵ Heidegger cited in Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I am*, 157.

For Bāṇa, the shared activities of Brahmins and birds reflect their common valuation. Further, he recognized the traditional Vedic and Brahmanical reliance on bird metaphors and played it out to comic expression. He deliberately juxtaposed animal with human to highlight commonalities, and that made his story better.

The Buddhist *Jātaka* account of the bird as a Brahmin teacher is much more complex. Presumably a Brahmin-bird entanglement was already in place for this story tradition when the Buddhist appropriation of the tale occurred, and the Buddhist narrator simply retained this element. Oskar von Hinüber has discussed the Buddhist adoption of Brahmanical narratives into the *Jātaka* collection, although these narratives, for example from the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, more typically re-appear in *Jātaka* verses.⁵⁶ This pattern does not seem to apply to the *Tittirajātaka*. The verses in the *Tittira* tale concern the culpability of the bad ascetic and the partridge's absence and death. The verses contain none of the story of the partridge taking up teaching after the human guru's death, the portion ostensibly modified from the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* or from a similar tale rendition. This partridge-as-preceptor narrative appears in the *first* half of the *Tittirajātaka*, which is entirely in prose.

⁵⁶ Von Hinüber suggests that the collection of alternatively 500 or 550 *Jātakas*, 547 of which are extant, were assembled by 500 CE, J. W. De Jong, "Review of Oskar von Hinüber, *Entstehung und Aufbau der Jātaka-Sammlung. Studien zur Literatur des Theravāda-Buddhismus I*," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 10, 1999, vol. 42:4, 375. Von Hinüber suggests there were two principal Pāli recensions of the *Jātakas*, 378, which seems to hold true for the case of the *Tittirajātaka*, as cross references from the commentators refer to two different titles for this story, *Daddarajātaka* and *Tittirajātaka*; they also reference different numbers for their cataloging. The variation in numbering and naming this tale indicates to von Hinüber that this story had prose variants, which not all *Jātakas* had. Oskar von Hinüber, *Entstehung und Aufbau der Jātaka-Sammlung. Studien zur Literatur des Theravāda-Buddhismus*, vol. 1 (Mainz: Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur: F. Steiner Verlag, 1998), 36. Von Hinüber also suggests that there was a separate Pāli recension preserved in South India from which the Burmese recension developed. This would account for the stark differences between the Pāli canon *Tittirajātaka* and the Pāli *Tittirajātaka* taken from the Burmese manuscript of the extended *Mahāvamsa*, which is entirely composed in verse. This parallel story warrants further investigation that I propose to complete in a future study. See Oskar von Hinüber, "The Tittira-Jātaka and the Extended Mahāvamsa," *The Journal of the Siam Society* 70.1-2 (1982): 71-75.

Despite this incongruity with the standard appearance of appropriated elements in the *Jātakas*, this tale pertains to the earlier story tradition of these tales, following von Hinüber's theory of the corpus's formation. In this story, the Buddha does not tell the verses, nor does he overtly participate in the narrative, as in the later *Jātakas*.⁵⁷ Only the final commentary, the *samodhāna* that connects the past story to Buddhist teachings, states that Partridge Pundit was one of the past lives of the Buddha. With this I establish that some elements of the *Tittira* story are pre-Buddhist and that the extant Pāli canon telling of this story is certainly early in comparison with the *Jātaka* corpus as a whole. However, the tale is exceptional in that its verses neither fit the expected pattern of stories that appropriate Brahmanical content in verse form nor the later pattern of the Buddha speaking the verses.

Bird as Brahmin, Bird as Religious Other: Appropriation and Assimilation

Although Buddhist compositional questions complicate matters, the tale clearly embraces the transposition of Brahmin into bird, and for various purposes, it seems. First and foremost is the appropriation of this tale for Buddhist doctrinal purposes. The *samodhāna* commentary that closes the story states that the Partridge Pundit who was teaching the *Vedas* to the Brahmin boys was really the Buddha in one of his past lives.⁵⁸ Thus the Brahmin, usually human but here a bird, is in actual fact the Buddha and not only Brahmanical as listeners might expect while hearing the story. This is a strategic literary device familiar from other works of Buddhist conversion literature such as the *Buddhacarita*, in which Prince Siddhārtha grows up in Brahmanical environs surpassed by the advances of later Buddhist developments. These texts imply that younger

⁵⁷ De Jong, "Review of Oskar von Hinüber, *Entstehung und Aufbau der Jātaka-Sammlung*," 377.

⁵⁸ This is the only mention of the Buddha in the whole story.

and later means superior, as Patrick Olivelle argues in explaining the presence of Brahmanical story references embedded in the *Life of the Buddha*.⁵⁹ In “Partridge Pundit’s Story,” the partridge’s teaching of the *Veda* conveniently shifts in the second half of the story into the partridge’s teaching of the *dhamma* to the lion and tiger. Thus, the story subtly deploys Buddhism as a replacement superior to Brahmanism. Finally, the story’s *samodhāna* adds that the partridge was, in fact, the Buddha(-to-be) the whole time, suggesting that the Buddha embodies all earlier Brahmanical teachings via appropriation before advancing his more evolved teachings. Curiously, the partridge teaches Brahmanical studies to humans (the *māṇavā*, Brahmin youth), but teaches Buddhist *dhamma* to animals.⁶⁰

Eventually, long after the story ends, the partridge is reborn as the Buddha, which means that this story implies at least two overt interspecies transpositions, plus the uncertain species blurring suggested by the partridge’s *loma* (hair, feathers, or skin). In the first transposition, the guru shifts from human form into partridge, and at the end of all the *Jātakas*, the partridge returns to earth as the Buddha, a human. But for the purposes of the Buddhist conversion tale, the transpositions are really from “inferior” Brahmanical teachings into Buddhist teachings and from “inferior” animal form into final human form as the Buddha, perfected after so many births.

⁵⁹ *The Life of the Buddha*, by Aśvaghōṣa, introduction and translation by Patrick Olivelle (New York: New York University Press: JJC Foundation, 2009). For the theme that the “young and the recent can surpass the old and the ancient,” xxx, see especially “Buddha’s Dharma as Consummation of Brahmanism,” xxv-xxx.

⁶⁰ For example, contrast “*māṇavā haṭṭhatuṭṭhā hutvā tittirapaṇḍitassa santike sippaṃ paṭṭhapesum*,” *Tittirajātaka*, *The Jātaka*, Pāli edition, 538, “*ahaṃ ācariye tumhākaṃ vācente sutvā va tayo vede paṇe akāsin’ti*,” *ibid.*, 537, “*tittiro kira araṇṇāyatane paṇasate māṇave mante vācetīti*,” *ibid.*, 538, with “*te pi pana sīhavyagghā tittirassa sahāyakā va kadāci so gantvā tesam dhammaṃ desetvā āgacchati*,” *ibid.*, 539. Since this story does not concern solely the Taittirīya lineage, the partridge teaches all three *Vedas* and not just part of the black *Yajurveda*, as was the focus of the Puranic tales.

This ultimate shift from animal into (super)human interestingly aligns with Derrida's exploration of rationalist ideas of human evolutionary advancement beyond animals: "In all cases, if I am (following) after it, the animal therefore comes before me, earlier than me (*früher* is Kant's word regarding the animal...). ... And also, therefore, since it is before me, it is behind me."⁶¹ Derrida expands this notion but ultimately rejects Kant's evaluation. This sort of rejection is not present, however, in Buddhist ideology. The *Jātakas* present the past lives of the Buddha as largely animal in embodiment as the Buddha-to-be was developing his perfection. The final thesis of these texts is that Buddhism is an evolutionarily more perfect religion than Brahmanism, just as they suggest humans and superhumans are more perfect than (non-human) animals.

An exploration of this story and its presentation of alterity does not end with the voice and doctrine of Buddhism surpassing the partridge's Brahmin identity and voice. Animal and human characters interact and conflict with each other in many ways, resulting in multiple strands of interspecies conversations and inter-religious comments. As I explained above, this occurs in one conversational strand with the character of Tittira himself as the embodiment of the animal other and the religious other. In this Buddhist story, the partridge, largely presented as a Brahmin teaching other Brahmins, meets his death in a narrative divergence from the Brahmanical *Purāṇas*. This may have been a humorous allusion for listeners who knew the tale's other versions. The killing of the partridge is a sort of Brahmanicide (*brahmahatyā*), an element that *did* appear in both Puranic narratives, although in those stories the gurus committed *brahmahatyā*; it was not enacted *upon* them. Thus the Buddhist narrative (or narrator) commits Brahmanicide and kills the religious other (Partridge Pundit) after already having done the same with

⁶¹ Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I am*, 10-11. Derrida's critique of some philosophers' analysis of the idea of animal does not end here, but space limitations restrict my discussion.

the earlier Vedic teacher. This caricature also transforms the Brahmanical sin of Brahmanicide into a Buddhist evil, *hiṃsā*, here, violence toward animals. This satirical device would have been humorous for Buddhist listeners in its appropriation of Brahmanical content, but would also have been useful for teaching Buddhist doctrine through its subtle assimilation of Brahmanical content. This mirrors the same process of appropriation and assimilation of Partridge Pundit's Brahmin identity into the Buddha's identity. Ultimately, this single tale illustrates that the process at work on the macro level throughout many *Jātakas*—incorporating content from the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* into the Theravāda *Suttapiṭaka*—also occurs in micro instances using Brahmanical texts beyond those epics discussed by von Hinüber.

Other than Other

All of these facets—the transposition from one to another, appropriation, and assimilation—suggest that perhaps alterity and othering are not the best terms to describe this phenomenon, although these are the terms which post-modernist discourse most commonly uses. Religious theorist Jonathan Z. Smith coined the term “proximate other” to describe a member of a different religion in close proximity to someone of another religion.⁶² Claire Maes, in her work on the Buddhist Pāli *Vinaya*, has added that this proximate other, spatially proximate and theoretically proximate to the religious tradition of focus, might also be theodoxically proximate and practically proximate in the sense of having very proximate praxes.⁶³ This applies to individuals such as the wandering mendicants of the early *samaṇa* tradition in Buddhism, practically proxi-

⁶² Jonathan Z. Smith, *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 27. Otherness is a matter of relative rather than absolute difference, and the proximate other is the most problematic difference, not the more remote or different other.

⁶³ Claire Maes, “Tracing Boundaries in the Pāli Vinaya,” (paper presented at Buddhism's Boundaries Conference, University of Texas, Austin, Texas, March 1-2, 2014.)

mate to Brahmanical and *Jaina* ascetics and to *ājīvika* mendicants. I suggest that a Buddhist possibly shared the *same* religious tradition with a proximate other before his or her conversion.

Someone who converted to Buddhism would have previously been a member of their proximate other's religious community. In such a context, the appropriation, assimilation, and absorption of the religious other observable in the *Tittirajātaka* would not be so unusual at all.

Nonetheless, the presentation of the proximate religious other is significant in the narrative structure of "Partridge Pundit's Tale." The partridge dies at the hand of a proximate religious other, the evil ascetic mendicant, and, significantly, the characters determine the ascetic's guilt because of the proof in his dreadlocks—the partridge's "feathers." The dreadlocks suggest that this ascetic is a caricature of a *Śaiva* renunciate. In the story, the lizard, lion, and tiger all voice their criticism in verse of the ascetic's participation in acrobatics, gambling, the trapping of animals, getting into fights at night, and an assortment of other offenses, all critiques of his not following *sammā kammanta* (Buddhist right conduct). Moreover, he kills the partridge as well as a cow and her calf for food, and thus suffers from gluttony. It is significant that a non-Buddhist religious other is the antagonist of this story and more so that he is a proximate other. A wandering mendicant ascetic (*tāpasa* in Pāli and Sanskrit) is not so far removed from a Buddhist *pravrajaka* who goes forth after taking the vow of ordination, living as a wandering mendicant following Buddhist precepts. As the lifestyle is similar between the two groups, difference markers such as having dreadlocks as opposed to being shaven-headed take on greater significance. For those hearing the story, this Śaivite's dreadlocks are a blatantly obvious reference to a praxis-based difference from the Buddhist community. In this way, the bad ascetic's alterity and differ-

ence markers, which serve as a crux in the narrative and reveal his guilt, bring overt humor to the story at the same time as critiquing the other.

Śaivite ascetics most frequently took the brunt of critiques for being false ascetics even in Brahmanical literature,⁶⁴ suggesting that this feature of the *Jātaka* story—the animals’ critique of the ascetic *in verse*—might also have appeared in what I hypothesize as this story’s other non-extant versions. The Śaivite ascetic critique confirms von Hinüber’s categorization of this story-type as part of the earlier *Jātaka* tradition that does not feature the Buddha speaking or reciting aphorisms in verse. Most of the *Tittirajātaka*’s verses, the earliest preserved portions of the story, mock the ascetic’s misdeeds, which one might not expect in an early, pre-Buddhist skeletal story. But this same sort of critique of religious other in the guise of a *Śaiva* ascetic also appears in other Brahmanical story traditions, so it is possible that this *Tittira* tale might retain much of the same form and content of the oral Brahmanical story that it was before its assimilation into this Buddhist telling.

To my knowledge there are only three other extant versions of this story. One is the *tittira* tale in the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, which I have eliminated from my discussion here due to constraints of space. Another is a much later (possibly tenth century CE) Buddhist version in the extended *Mahāvamsa* from Burmese manuscripts. This Burmese-script *Tittirajātaka* might have been translated back into Pāli from Burmese, might be part of a now lost South Indian Pāli canon recension that von Hinüber hypothesizes, or might be an alternate story version in addition to the two main Pāli canon *Jātaka* stories that potentially existed of the *Tittirajātaka* (see footnote 54,

⁶⁴ Maurice Bloomfield, “On False Ascetics and Nuns in Hindu Fiction,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 44 (1924): 206. Bloomfield discusses how the “mock description(s) of ascetic get-up” reflect “scepticism as to the sincerity or efficacy of such professions in general” and suggest “contempt in the mind of the listener upon hearing about such characters.”

page 29).⁶⁵ The final extant tale is a version in the Siamese *Paksi Pakarana* (*Book of Birds*), a sort of Siamese *Pañcatantra*.⁶⁶ I base my hypothesis that there must have been additional non-extant versions of this story acting as intermediate bridges that developed into the *Tittirajātaka* as we know it today because 1.) the Buddhist story is much more elaborate than the Puranic tales told in verse, 2.) the majority of the story's content is Brahmanical in nature, including the portions of Śaivite critique, and 3.) there are other variants in existence today.

Out of the Cage and into the....

In “Partridge Pundit’s Tale,” the partridge comes freely to his home, and the Brahmin students make him a beautiful cage to honor him, giving honey and flowers as well, as a sort of *gurudakṣiṇā*. This is a reversal of the usual Indian metaphor of birds and cages, namely, that through flight, birds can attain liberation from things such as nets, the entrapments of physical embodied life, and potentially even release from the cycle of rebirth. The standard metaphor is familiar to us from the story of Śuka in the *Mahābhārata*. As son of Vyāsa he has already attained so much knowledge that he realizes he needs to work toward release; he deliberately seeks *mukti*.⁶⁷ This tale appears in the portion of the *Mahābhārata* that discusses the *dharma* of final release, the higher purpose for the lessons in this section of the epic. Buddhist followers were also familiar with this metaphor. By the first or second century CE, Buddhist convert Aśvaghoṣa recurred to this trope in Brahmanical *yogin* Arāḍa’s discourse on meditation and release: “Then,

⁶⁵ Von Hinüber, “The *Tittira-Jātaka* and the Extended *Mahāvamsa*,” 71-75.

⁶⁶ The partridge story is the thirteenth story in the *Paksi Pakarana*, according to Hertel, *Das Pañcatantra*, 349, cited by Bloomfield, “On False Ascetics,” 226.

⁶⁷ *Mahābhārata*, trans. by Smith, 658.

like a reed from its grass sheath, or like a bird from a bird-cage, Knower of the field [the soul], from body freed, is designated ‘released being.’”⁶⁸

The most direct inspiration for this metaphor is, as Dähnhardt has identified, “birds’ capacity to rise to the higher dimensions.”⁶⁹ Dähnhardt’s spatial identification is an important distinction in the roles that birds play in South Asian narratives. One common guise in which the bird appears is as messenger (*dūta*) because of the animal’s particular abilities of articulation and mimesis, in addition to flight across great distances. The bird as messenger opens a horizontal spatial context for interspecies relations between human and bird. But the trope of the bird as released soul (*mukta*) presents a vertical spatiality in which to consider the interspecies entanglement. In Dähnhardt’s spatial analysis, “(t)he vertical axis allows for the opening of a channel of communication between the immanent and the transcendent planes.”⁷⁰ Significantly, flight is something that human animals admire in birds. This non-human capacity can facilitate access to other realms, such as those involved in death leading to transcendence, as in the Buddhist *Jātakas* and *Avadānas*, or transcendence for transmigration into a different body, as in *Kādambarī*. The *Jātakas*, the *Avadānas*, and *Kādambarī* all include bird spatiality that is both horizontal for interspecies communication and vertical for transfers to different realms or transcendence through rebirth.

According to Kavirāja and his commentators in the *Sāhitya Darpaṇa*, a work on poetics and aesthetics, *Kādambarī* presents the *rasa* (aesthetic sentiment) of love in separation, the ab-

⁶⁸ *The Life of the Buddha. tato muñjād iṣṭikeva śakuniḥ pañjarād iva | kṣetrajño niḥśṛto dehān mukta ityabhidhīyate || Buddhacarita* 12.64.

⁶⁹ Dähnhardt, “Winged Messengers,” 171.

⁷⁰ Dähnhardt, “Winged Messengers,” 170.

sence of *rasa* due to the descriptions of death (something of a faux pas in Sanskrit literature), and the *rasa* of compassion (*karuṇa*).⁷¹ Because the novel describes love lost, the commentators did not consider that the poetics describing Puṇḍarīka and Mahāśvetā fits under the rubric of *eros*, *śṛṅgāra*, because their love was “not regainable, or regainable only after transmigration in another body.”⁷² Both couples, lovers in prior births, are separated from their loves in their present lives. It is only by dying and transcending this life that the lovers reunite in their next birth, which parrot Vaiśampāyana instigates in the king’s court where, amusingly, the Brahmin minister who councils the king carries the name Śukanāsa (Parrotbeak or Parrotnosed).⁷³ Vaiśampāyana is the agent who reunites lovers via his story-telling that reminds everyone of their former loves.

This theme of lovers longing for reunion that is made possible through liberation from the body recurs in subcontinental literature via the motif of a bird obtaining release. Dähnhardt discusses this trope in relation to Persian and Urdu love poetry: “Birds such as the ever-recurring nightingale (*bulbul*) were employed as an allegory of the human soul (*rafs*) trapped in the cage of the physical body yearning to regain its primordial freedom in the unlimited realm of the spirit.”⁷⁴ Thus the bird represents release, liberation, and transmigration on an abstract level, and in *Kādambarī*, parrot Vaiśampāyana’s agency procures this liberation resulting in lovers’ reunion. Less typically, his *speech*, not his ability to fly, mediates his agency toward liberation.

⁷¹ *The Kādambarī of Bāṇa*, trans. by C. M. Ridding, xii-xiii.

⁷² *Ibid.*, xiii.

⁷³ *The Kādambarī of Bāṇa*, trans. by C. M. Ridding, 49.

⁷⁴ Dähnhardt, “Winged Messengers,” 170. The terminology here is Persian but Dähnhardt describes the motif in Urdu love poetry as well.

The ideas of release and transmigration that birds embody in Indian texts do not only subserve notions of love; the bird is also a model for attaining release as a *summum bonum*. While Hindu texts use the bird as metaphor for human *mukti*, Buddhist writers bring the bird metaphor of release into examples showing ideal behavior aiming toward spiritual advancement. This behavior that birds and other animals exhibit frequently appears in the much-derided fable genre. Modern scholars often critique and devalue this genre because they consider that these stories present anthropomorphisms of animals, meaning that the stories talk about animals while *really* talking about humans.⁷⁵ In Derrida's description: "We know the history of fabulization and how it remains an anthropomorphic taming, a moralizing subjection, a domestication. Always a discourse of man, on man, indeed on the animality of man, but for and in man."⁷⁶ This is certainly true in many contexts. However, this may present an incomplete analysis of such texts, as sometimes stories talking about animals are really talking about animals.

Anthropomorphism is a convention through which to present information to human listeners. As humans, we privilege linguistic and language-based modes of understanding reality. We also identify and recognize ourselves in others, as Kay Milton rightly designated "egomorphism."⁷⁷ I consider that sometimes this egomorphism is the conventional mode of presentation that a writer or artist initiates, and at other times this is an identification with ego that happens on

⁷⁵ These scholars include, among others, Wendy Doniger in "Zoomorphism in Ancient India" Jonathan Burt, "Emphasis on the 'textual, metaphor animal'... risks reducing 'the animal to a mere icon,' placing 'the animal outside history,'" cited by Daston and Mitman, *Thinking with Animals*, 5, and others.

⁷⁶ Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I am*, 37.

⁷⁷ Kay Milton has identified egomorphism as a manifestation "with the self or ego as the 'primary point of reference for understanding both human and non-human things.'" Kay Milton "Anthropomorphism or Egomorphism?" 255-267, cited by Martha Selby, in Introduction to *Tamil Love Poetry: The Five Hundred Short Poems of the Aṅkurunūru*, trans. and ed. by Martha Selby (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 19.

the part of the listener or reader. Further, this identification might be a mistaken one due to the complicated material entanglement of living beings in our experience and in our literatures. In other words, as human observers, we are naturally predisposed to assume that, for example, a monkey who smiles is *like us*. We solipsistically conclude that this behavior is anthropomorphic, instead of simply observing that both humans and apes smile, although our motivations, intentions, or meanings might differ. One might consider the possibility that human animals smile *like monkeys*. An analysis of the metaphorical use of anthropomorphism in fables or other human creations and our resultant assumed identification with our own behavior might warrant a paradigm reversal.

The Buddhist story tradition offers fine examples of anthropomorphism that we humans might mistakenly egomorphize, for example, when birds act independently, building toward their own liberation and enlightenment. Some of these texts certainly suggest that animal behavior be a model for human behavior, but it is animal behavior in its own right. While most schools of Buddhism consider animal births inferior to human births in the hierarchical ontology of living beings,⁷⁸ some of these stories feature non-human animals attaining liberation, in agreement with Buddhist (and sometimes Brahmanical) ideologies. David Pinault considers that in certain subcontinental schemas, “non-human animals share with humans the desire for spiritual advancement.”⁷⁹ This might only be an idea that some humans on the subcontinent have, meaning that humans imagine that we share with animals the same desire for advancement and liberation. But

⁷⁸ Andy Rotman, trans. *Divine Stories: Divyavadana*, Part 1 (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2008), 377.

⁷⁹ David Pinault, “Horses that Weep, Birds that Tell Fortunes: Animals in South Asian Muslim Ritual and Myth,” in *Charming Beauties and Frightful Beasts*, 149.

working from textual evidence, there is some reason to consider this possibility. Pinault argues that

Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism all possess stories conveying a common insight. Animals and humans share the existential condition of being struggling wayfarers, subjected to karma and samsara...propelled along the helical vortex of time. Therefore, animals - and this is an important difference from Islamic doctrine - share with humans the opportunity to make moral and salvation-related choices that will improve their spiritual status after their current earthly existence.⁸⁰

Pinault returns the agency to animals, although it was already in place in these stories.

One such story is the *Śukapataka Divyāvadāna*, a Sanskrit tale of two parrot chicks who used speech to advance to Trāyastriṃśa, Tuṣita, and other realms of the gods, eventually becoming *pratyeka* (solitary) *buddhas*.⁸¹ In the story, the two parrots chicks received a visit from the Buddha, who gave them a discourse on the *dharma* and established the birds in the refuges and the precepts of Buddhism. Consequently, they took their vows and, at a crucial moment in their lives, about to be eaten by a cat, “(w)ith their awareness focused on the Buddha, the dharma, and the community, they died and were reborn among the Cāturmahārājika gods.”⁸² They had repeated the mantras of “Praise to the Buddha! Praise to the *dharma*! Praise to the community!” immediately before and while the cat mauled them to death.⁸³ The story summarizes their future progress through the various divine realms, including *Nirmāṇarati* (Delighting in Creation) and *Paranirmitavaśavartin* (Masters of Others’ Creations) before their final human births and even-

⁸⁰ Pinault states that animals and even trees and grass are involuntary Muslims per Islamic thought. Ibid., 147-8.

⁸¹ Rotman, *Divine Stories*, 335. The *Śukapataka* tale is the sixteenth chapter of the *Divyāvadāna*.

⁸² Ibid., 334-5.

⁸³ Ibid., 334.

tual attainment of *pratyeka* buddhahood. The Buddha concludes the story by saying, “(i)t is this, monks, that you should learn to do.”⁸⁴

Upon hearing this story, as egocentric and egomorphically habituated humans, we tend to assume that the parrots represent ideal humans. This means that formally the parrot chicks are birds, but that in expression, we think they must represent human behavior and are thus anthropomorphized characters. However, if one does not immediately recur to assumed egomorphism and considers the new materialist approach, the story might simply communicate the parrot chicks’ agency and describe their enactment via their bodily apparatuses, irrespective of liberal humanist ideas of choice in the discussion of agency. After all, parrots are excellent at repeating short phrases, and Buddhist monks ought to be doing the same with their minds on the *triratna* (the Buddha, the *dharma*, and the *saṅgha* [the community]). These birds are not simply acting like humans (egomorphism); the moral tale presents their enactments as a model of animal behavior for humans to emulate.

The new materialist approach also highlights at least one aspect of Buddhist ontology. While Buddhist thought encompasses the idea that choice and effort affect one’s moral conduct and progress toward enlightenment, it also forwards the notion that animals, like humans, are on a shared path toward eventual enlightenment. New materialism reveals that our entanglement with ourselves prevents us from seeing the wider spectrum of materiality and meaning that make up the material-discursive content from which we build our lives, ideas, and creations. Here, a humanist discourse reliant on dichotomies obscures this aspect of Buddhist ideology—our shared path toward enlightenment.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 335. Same page for the discussion of the divine realms.

Animal Speech and the (Dis)location of the Human

A Little Bird Told Me: Bird Voice as Creative Voice

With my earlier examples of parrot Śuka's narration of portions of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and Vaiśampāyana's narration of *Kādambarī*, I offered evidence that the presence of bird narrators was indicative of the high valuation of mimetic capacities in pre-modern Indian traditions. Certain avian species have particularly fine abilities of memorization, imitation, and articulation of sound, all necessary for the correct preservation and recitation of texts. A reconsideration of agency as an enactment using bodily apparatuses allows narrator birds to be agents of their acts and returns them their rightful subjectivity. Detractors unfairly assume that birds simply imitate sounds they have heard, removing the birds' responsibility for their own speech acts. This same criticism is often (also unfairly) lodged against past and present Vedic reciters who memorize and preserve texts for future generations, as well as against priests and practitioners of modern Hindu traditions who chant portions of the Veda from memory without necessarily understanding the meaning of what they recite. One example of such denigration is "many Brahmans purportedly reciting sacred texts—especially priests during rituals—actually have no idea what their utterances mean 'and are often reduced to inaudible mumbling or brazening it out with gobbledygook.'"⁸⁵ Opinions like this one indicate that a lack of content-based understanding is a flaw in recitation that detracts from the agency of the act.

One of my aims is to problematize this conception of the memorization tradition in light of the Indian framework of orality. I reject a purely meaning-based evaluation—that only the un-

⁸⁵ Jonathan P. Parry, "The Brahmanical Tradition and the Technology of the Intellect," in *Reason and Morality*, edited by Joanna Overing, (London: Tavistock, 1985), 204, cited by C. J. Fuller, "Orality, Literacy and Memorization: Priestly Education in Contemporary South India," *Modern Asian Studies* 35, 1 (2001): 2.

derstanding of a text is important—in favor of considering the entire material-discursive apparatus, of which meaning is only one facet. The material apparatus through which memorization and reproduction are possible is at least as important as meaning. One classic defense of the tradition is that the memorization of massive lengths of text requires such vast mental energy that the people who dedicate their efforts to memorization for preservation are not also required to dedicate an equally extensive amount of time to language study and textual interpretation, which others carry out. Historically, the reciter tradition commanded great admiration, as with the revered *bhāṇakas* (reciters) who memorized extensive amounts of Buddhist compositions before scribes recorded the texts in script.⁸⁶ Interestingly, there is some evidence that the *bhāṇakas* might not only have recited but also redacted some Buddhist *piṭaka* texts,⁸⁷ suggesting that what superficially appears to be the spokesperson, voice, or “recorder” of material for posterity might also be (partial) creator of those same texts.

While authorship of an original text is not so significant for Sanskritic oral traditions, not acknowledging any creative role in those who narrate or recite may deny a vital part of the reciter’s enactment. Recall that *Kādambarī*’s Vaiśampāyana is the narrator of most of the novel but is also an original voice who can claim authorship of verses and songs. In the *Caṇḍāla* girl’s description of the parrot’s abilities, “(h)e recites, and himself composes graceful and incomparable modern romances, love-stories, plays, and poems, and the like.”⁸⁸ *Kādambarī* is unusually avian-

⁸⁶ Von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāli Literature*, 25. Certain Buddhist texts such as the *Vinaya* were not the task of *bhāṇakas* to memorize. These texts had “*dharas*,” which I speculate suggests they existed in written form from their composition. Ibid., footnote 92.

⁸⁷ “These *bhāṇakas* may also have been the redactors of the texts, if the information that the Dīghabhāṇakas incorporated the Khuddakanikāya into the Abhidhammapiṭaka (§85) is taken into consideration.” Von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāli Literature*, 25.

⁸⁸ *The Kādambarī of Bāṇa*, trans. by C. M. Ridding, 10.

centric in its medium of narration, agency, and narrative structure, but the author Bāṇa also ascribes the arts of composition to the bird. Other Sanskrit texts typically limit birds' range to pedagogy, excluding artistic creation; in the *Śukasaptati*, the parrot teaches lessons about *kāma* to a young prince, but the parrot is simply the transmitter of knowledge.

Lorraine Daston and Gregg Mitman, literary scholars in animal studies, suggest that most works incorporate animals to streamline a story's message and to add interest to what might otherwise be a less stimulating transmittal of material: "Whereas the same stories told about humans might lose the moral in a clutter of individuating detail of the sort we are usually keen to know about other people, substituting animals as actors strips the characterizations down to prototypes. Animals simplify the narrative to a point that would be found flat or at least allegorical if the same tales were recounted about humans."⁸⁹ Here Daston and Mitman identify the reductionist interpretation of the fable genre that the *Pañcatantra* embodies. This reductionist approach can aptly describe certain works of literature but relegates animals to simplistic categories that literary examples such as *Kādambarī* do not support. *Kādambarī*'s parrot is different.

Bāṇa presents the animal as an experiencing individual and grants him his own subjectivity by depicting the "species-typical way of living in the world" for the parrot. Kenneth Shapiro and Marion Copeland, two critical theorists in animal studies, have identified these qualities as criteria for literary analysis in order to observe if a text resorts to animal representations for symbolic purposes, for human concerns, or for ends that do not efface the lives of the animals themselves.⁹⁰ One medium that does not typically erase animal lives is the animal autobiography. The

⁸⁹ Daston and Mitman, *Thinking with Animals*, 9.

⁹⁰ Kenneth Shapiro and Marion W. Copeland, "Editors' Note: Toward a Critical Theory of Animal Issues in Fiction." *Society and Animals* 13:4 (2005), 345, cited by Karla Armbruster, "What Do We Want from Talking Animals?," 21.

autobiography, a genre that has received much scholarly attention in recent years, building on Ludwig Wittgenstein's theories of the self and self-reflection,⁹¹ necessitates subjectivity and subjective recounting.

Kādambarī qualifies as an animal autobiography and presents the individuality of Vaiśampāyana without denying the bird his lived experience. Vaiśampāyana tenderly shares his early life as a parrot chick in one episode of animal subjectivity in which tribal Śabarās are hunting, startling the animals of the forest, and causing the commotion of trampling elephants. Vaiśampāyana shares, "all the young parrots (were) resting quietly in their nests.(...)As from my youth my wings were hardly fledged and had no strength..... I shook for fear, and thinking that my father, who was close by, could help me, I crept within his wings, loosened as they were by age."⁹² Then the Śabara leader heard the birds' cries, intending to take the baby parrots from their nests. He climbed the tree where the birds hid

and plucked the young parrots from among its boughs one by one, as if they were its fruit, for some were not yet strong for flight; some were only a few days old, and were pink with the down of their birth, so that they might almost be taken for cotton flowers; some, with their wings just sprouting, were like fresh lotus-leaves; some were like the Asclepias fruit; some, with their beaks growing red, had the grace of lotus-buds with their heads rising pink from slowly unfolding leaves; while some, under the guise of the ceaseless motion of their heads, seemed to try to forbid him, though they could not stop him, for he slew them and cast them on the ground.⁹³

Bāṇa (writing the character of Vaiśampāyana) recounts this episode in part to explain how the bird ended up living with sages in a hermitage in the first place (because the Śabarās ignore

⁹¹ See Garry Hagberg, *Describing Ourselves: Wittgenstein and Autobiographical Consciousness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁹² *The Kādambarī of Bāṇa*, trans. by C. M. Ridding, 25.

⁹³ *The Kādambarī of Bāṇa*, trans. by C. M. Ridding, 32.

insignificant baby Vaiśampāyana, devastating the other birds' nests), but also to impart authentic subjective interest to his story's readers. This is an animal's subjectivity and not necessarily anthropomorphically-displaced human subjectivity that uses an animal as a metaphorical substitution for a human. For the purposes of literary criticism, it is irrelevant if the representations are accurate or not; realism is only one formal mode among possible presentations of subjectivity. In this story, readers get a sense of Bāṇa's idea of the bird's lived experiences and Bāṇa presents the bird as subject without othering the animal. Sadly, I suggest he has done so in order to demarcate another "other," the Śabara tribals whom the author presents as violent and cruel outcasts who ravage the forest. Bāṇa treats the birds as like us, as he has done throughout his twisting love-story that tangles Brahmins and birds from beginning to end. But he does so in order to highlight the alterity of the true other for him, the Śabara clan's people.

A Little Bird Told Them: Pre-modern Paradigms for Bird Speech

There are limits to what ancient Indian texts involving bird speech can tell us today; contextualization using early Indian taxonomies and ontologies can illuminate what bird voice and language about birds might have communicated to readers and listeners in the past. Of the varying ideologies that account for birds in pre-modern India, perhaps the earliest taxonomy appears in the *Puruṣasūkta* (*Ṛgveda* 10.90.8). This hymn presents a spatial or habitat-based taxonomy: "it made the beasts of the air and of the wild, as well as those of the village."⁹⁴ This taxonomy separates air-dwellers from land-dwellers, and is useful for understanding the metaphor of the bird as symbol for release. Later Brahmanical classifications of the bird pertain to dietary rules for hu-

⁹⁴ *Rgveda* 10.90.8, *pada* c and d. *paśun tāṃś cakre vāyavyān āraṇyān grāmiyāś ca ye* || Trans. by Patrick Olivelle, "Food for Thought: Dietary Rules and Social Organization in Ancient India," *2001 Gonda Lecture* (Amsterdam: Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2002), 7, footnote 4.

mans but are also habitat-based taxonomies; for example, the *dharmasāstra* treats birds as land-dwellers, both in the wild (*āraṇyaka*), as with vultures, and in domesticated areas (*grāmya*), including chickens and pet birds.⁹⁵ Parrots kept as pets fit in the *grāmya* classification. Interestingly, parrots' art of mimicry and use of human speech only develop when the birds live in captivity; they "do not imitate other birds in the wild."⁹⁶ Avian speech abilities, in actual fact, depend on their habitat and their socialization with human animals, making a spatial-based taxonomy such as this one a relevant way to conceive of these animals.

Bird taxonomies in texts of *āyurveda* as well as *dharmasāstra* also include divisions according to how each bird species eats. Broadly speaking, birds fall into either the *viṣkīra* category (birds who pick food from the ground by scratching their feet, eating scattered food) or the *pratuda* category (birds who peck food from trees, eating primarily fruit according to the medical tradition).⁹⁷ A food consumption based taxonomy is useful for my analysis; the partridge is a *viṣkīra* bird,⁹⁸ picking up scattered food from the ground. The Puranic partridge stories observe how the partridges pick up bits of text from the ground, and this resonates with dharmashastric and ayurvedic discourses' conceptions of this bird.

Taxonomies for animals in ancient India additionally classify according to the number of feet, thus, the two-footed group (*dvipadam*) or the four-footed group (*catuṣpadam*) appears in

⁹⁵ Olivelle, "Food for Thought," 8-9.

⁹⁶ Paul Carter, *Parrot* (London: Reaktion, 2006), 8 and 13. He also cites Joseph M. Forshaw, *Parrots of the World* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1973), 320: "(P)arrots talk *only* in captivity."

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

various Vedic hymns.⁹⁹ Sāyaṇa, a medieval commentator on the *Vedas*, was surely not alone in placing humans at the head of the two-footed class.¹⁰⁰ It is curious that this taxonomy, by foot, includes birds in the same classification as humans, whereas animals like cows belong to a different group. This classification, in existence since the Vedic period, puts birds “on equal footing” with humans, so it is no wonder that the earlier pre-modern period is so entrenched with Brahmin-bird entanglements.¹⁰¹

These ancient taxonomies illuminate how humans might have understood birds in their environs, but it is equally important to consider different kinds of speech, my topic for the remainder of this report. South Asian paradigms concerning speakers and voice challenge western paradigms, as for example in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*:

‘When people in this world offer no oblation and lack true knowledge, but cook for themselves **animals that cry out**, those animals take the form of men in the other world and eat in return.’ ‘How does one avoid that?’ ‘When you offer the first oblation with the voice, that is how you avoid it and are free of it.’ ... ‘When people in this world offer no oblation and lack true knowledge, but cook for themselves **rice and barley, which scream soundlessly**, that rice and barley take the form of men in the other world and eat in return.’ ‘How can one avoid that?’ ‘When you offer the last oblation with the mind, that is how you avoid it and are free of it.’¹⁰²

All living beings cry, even rice and barley, albeit soundlessly. Rice and barley are living beings because they have the potential to germinate at any point, thus the life force remains inside them

⁹⁹ This distinction appears in AV2.34.1, RV3.62.14; TS4.3.4.3 and 5.2.9.4-5 and more, per Brian K. Smith, *Classifying the Universe: The Ancient Indian Varṇa System and the Origins of Caste* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 243.

¹⁰⁰ “Sāyaṇa glosses ‘four-footed’ with *gavādīnam*, animals ‘beginning with the cow,’ and *manuṣyādīnam*, animals ‘beginning with man,’ for the ‘two-footed.’” Smith, *Classifying the Universe*, 276, footnote 8.

¹⁰¹ For the purposes of this report, I divide the earlier from the later pre-modern period according to a shift in the appreciation and treatment of preexisting Brahmin-bird entanglements, starting roughly in the late medieval period (as notable in Bhaṭṭa Bhāskara Miśra’s response to the *Taittirīya*). This divides the second millennium CE from the first, broadly speaking.

¹⁰² *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* 1.43, trans. by Wendy Doniger O’ Flaherty in *Tales of Sex and Violence: Folklore, Sacrifice, and Danger in the Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 33-34.

long after harvesting. Rice and barley cry soundlessly, but this is because of the limitations of our human *indriyas*, sense organs, in perceiving their voice. In an interpretation of this *Brāhmaṇa*, all living beings make sounds, cry, or communicate, whether a human can perceive or understand it or not.

An additional recognition of animal sounds and language appears in *Yogasūtra* 3.17 (ca. 400 CE), on the special yogic power of understanding the meaning of animal noises. It is implicit in this *sūtra* that, if animal noises have meaning that *some* people can understand, these noises are language, albeit language that common humans do not understand. The yogic method in this chapter is to attain broad mastery of *saṁyama*—joint restraint in yoga that is practiced on one object, consisting of joining three parts: *dhyāna* (concentration), *dhāraṇa* (reflection or absorption), and *samādhi* (abstract meditation, an *active* practice of placement).¹⁰³ Then the *yogin* applies mastery of *saṁyama* to a number of specific areas, including the interpretation of animal sounds that do not follow the conventions of human language. The *sūtra* reads, “From the mutual superposition of concept, objects (or meanings [*artha*]), and sounds, there is co-mingling (*saṁkara*). From *saṁyama* on the separate divisions of that co-mingling, there is knowledge of the noises of all beings.”¹⁰⁴ The commentators on this *sūtra* take the opportunity to address the topic of language, conventions (understood through the unit of the syllable, letter, or word, according to which school of philosophy each commentator follows), how meaning occurs inher-

¹⁰³ The *Vyāsaśāstra* defines *saṁyama* as “*ekaviṣayāṇi trīṇi sādhanāni saṁyama iti ucyate*” in the discussion of *sūtra* 3.4. *Pātañjalayogadarśanam: Tattvavaiśārādī-Yogavārttiketiṭīkādvayopetaṁ Vyāsaśāstram*, vol. 3 (Vārāṇasī: Kāśī Hindū Vidyāśālā, 1992), 1083.

¹⁰⁴ *Yogasūtra* 3.17. *śabdārthapratyayānām itaretarādhyāsāt saṁkaraḥ tatpravibhāgasamāyamat sarvabhūtarutajñānam* | *Pātañjalayogadarśanam*, 1221. My translation.

ently in each unit of sound, and how the human mind is able to perceive and understand sound units as language.¹⁰⁵

The *Vyāśabhāṣya*, compiled by the original author of the *sūtras* or, more likely, by an anonymous compiler some time later, and the *Tattvavaiśārādī* of Vācaspati Miśra, a polymath with Vedantic and *Naiyāyika* leanings (ca. 10th century CE), discuss language, sound, and conventional meaning at length. Both commentators' discourses are relevant here in bringing up the notion of speech or voice (*vāc*) as *varṇa*-based, i.e., based on sound units of syllables, phonemes, or letters, depending on one's interpretation of the idea of *varṇa*. The *Vyāśabhāṣya* for this *sūtra* begins, "In this [*sūtra*], voice or speech has significance only in the letters," or more literally, "In this [*sūtra*], the holder of meaning is in the sound units of speech" (*tatra vāg varṇeṣu eva arthavati*).¹⁰⁶ This idea contrasts with the Sanskrit grammar commentators' discussion of speech and animal language in my next section, but *varṇas* are prominent in that discussion as well. Regardless, one key aspect of the *Yogasūtra* commentary is that "the division (of concept, object or meaning [*artha*], and sound) is known through convention."¹⁰⁷ This indicates that the meaning or understanding of a verbal expression depends on the convention that a certain social structure dictates, often involuntarily. A word or noise means what the social group in question wants and conventionally understands it to mean.

According to this philosophical discussion, an animal language has conventions of meanings that animals use to communicate via sound units (or noise). The social structure of that ani-

¹⁰⁵ *Pātañjalayogadarśanam*, 1221-1238 and on.

¹⁰⁶ *Pātañjalayogadarśanam*, *Vyāśabhāṣya*, 1222.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. *tasya saṃketabuddhitāḥ pravibhāgaḥ* |

mal species (or family, perhaps) has determined those conventions of meaning. If a *yogin* can make the proper divisions (*vibhāgās*) to deconstruct a speech act, and then can reassemble those parts using *saṃyama*, he is able to understand animal language. Vācaspati Miśra wrote on various schools of thought in India, so his comments at times might reflect a broad, widespread perspective that reflects the thinking of most *āstika* (orthodox Brahmanical) schools of philosophy. He followed the *bhāṣya*'s idea of meaning in speech and added that “this speech is meaningful only in the syllables or sounds *as established in common belief and not in the verbal expression*—this is the meaning.”¹⁰⁸ With this he adds another layer of meaning to the earlier notion that speech's content is convention-based and according to sound: for Vācaspati, it is not the verbal expression of this speech that imparts meaning. The act of speaking is not important; something else is. This idea will also be important in the following discussion.

“Oh, my beauty, the roosters are singing all together!” When Sanskrit Grammarians Speak about Speaking

The *Yogasūtrāṇi* and commentaries only tangentially reflect perceptions about animal language on the subcontinent in the period from approximately the fourth or fifth century CE through the tenth century CE, although this school of thought certainly builds on broader currents of thought that surround the school. The grammatical tradition of the Sanskrit language offers significantly more insight into animal language and *vāk* (speech or voice). The most pertinent discussion stems from the *Mahābhāṣya* that Patañjali composed; this work incorporates Kātyāyana's commentatorial *Vārttika* in order to analyze Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, the foundation text of

¹⁰⁸*Pāṇinīyāyogadarśanam*, 1226. *iti | sā vāk varṇeṣu eva yathālokapratīṣiddheṣu arthavatī na ca vācaka ityarthah*

Sanskrit grammar and linguistics. Patañjali's text initiates a valuable discussion among later commentators who were linguists, grammarians, and philosophers.

The passage discussing animal speech occurs in Pāṇini's section detailing *ātmanepada* verb usage. Pāṇini indicates when to use and not to use middle verbs, sometimes with a reflexive sense, sometimes depending on the verbal root and preverbs. Patañjali clarifies Pāṇini's concise aphorism 1.3.48 as he often does, by offering a negative example to show the opposite usage in which the *sūtra* rule does not apply. Here, then, he includes a case when one must use the *parasmaipada* verbal terminations. Patañjali offers an example apparently extracted from romantic verse: “*varatanu sampravadanti kukkuṭāḥ*” (“Oh, my beauty, the roosters are singing all together!”).¹⁰⁹ This is a situation when one must use the *parasmaipada* and not the *ātmanepada* form *sampravadante*. The traditional interpretation of Pāṇini's *sūtra* is that we reserve *ātmanepada* for situations that are “*vyaktavācām samuccāraṇe*”¹¹⁰ (“In the sense of ‘*vyakta*’ voice[s] speaking together.”) The grammar tradition concludes that this implicitly suggests human speech, but I elaborate the commentators' discussion of *vyaktavācām* as follows.¹¹¹

The original point of contention arises because *vyaktavāk* literally means “manifested voice or speech,”¹¹² meaning speech sounds that are audible and emitted from the mouth of any

¹⁰⁹ *Īyākaraṇamahābhāṣya of Patañjali with the Commentary (Bhāṣyapradīpa) of Kaiyaṭa Upādhyāya and the Super-commentary (Bhāṣyapradīpodyota) of Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa*, vol. 2, *Vidhiśeṣarūpam*, edited with notes and variants by M. M. Pandit Shivdatta Sharma, (Delhi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, 1988), 165. Kṣemendra in his *Aucityavicāracarcā* (ad 24) attributes this verse to Kumāradāsa. Per Jean Filliozat, *Le Mahābhāṣya de Patañjali, avec le Pradīpa de Kaiyaṭa et l'Uddyota de Nāgeśa*, trans. by Filliozat, vol. 5 (Pondicherry: Institut Français d'Indologie, 1975), 216.

¹¹⁰ Pāṇini *sūtra* 1.3.48.

¹¹¹ Please refer to *Appendix B* for my full annotated translation and *Appendix C* for the original Sanskrit text of this commentatorial discussion. The commentaries appear in *Īyākaraṇamahābhāṣya of Patañjali*, vol. 2, 165.

¹¹² The word *vyakta* has many meanings, including manifest, perceptible to the senses, and apparent. Secondary, derived meanings for the word include distinct, intelligible, developed, and so on.

living being.¹¹³ After all, the *dhātupāṭha* indicates the use of verbal root *vad* for both human speech and animal “cries.” Because the same verb can express either that an animal speaks or a human speaks, the tradition has interpreted Pāṇini to mean that, when using preverbs “*sam*” and “*pra*,” one form (*parasmaipada*) is for animals while the other (*ātmanepada*) is for humans. Presumably, most humans would think it obvious that this sort of speech (*vyaktavāk*) implies human voiced speech. The commentarial discussion arises, however, because these grammarians are pedants and need to negotiate the precise meaning, range, and interlocutors of such “manifest speech,” since one could argue that many animals voice utterances with manifest audible speech, the only indication that Pāṇini gives.

The discussion is not facile, so here I will detail Patañjali’s argument, clarify the commentators’ interpretation, and add my own supercommentary. Patañjali develops an explanation of why the designation of manifest or articulate speech refers to human and not animal speech, which the later tradition generally labels *avyaktavāk*. In the process, he has to adapt the semantic range of the term “*vyakta*” for his purposes and resort to an unconventional analysis of the nominal compound in Pāṇini’s *sūtra*. First, Patañjali states that animals like roosters *do* have manifested voice. Then, he justifies the rule dictating one verbal form for humans and another for animals through his determination that “*vyakta*” must mean not only manifest and perceptible but *especially articulate* in voice, meaning that the voice must be able to articulate *all* of the sounds (*varṇa*) in the Sanskrit alphabet.¹¹⁴ He specifies that roosters do not have this ability.

¹¹³ Filliozat, *Le Mahābhāṣya de Patañjali*, 217.

¹¹⁴ Interestingly, in his effort to make articulate speech the domain of only humans, Patañjali unintentionally *excludes* some humans from this group: those who, because of irregularities in their organs of vocal production or because of different capacities, are not able to produce all of the sounds represented in the Sanskrit alphabet.

Then Patañjali introduces a straw man to challenge his idea by saying, “But roosters *do* have articulate voice and they say ‘cock-a-doodle-doo!’” Patañjali proceeds to tear down the straw man with the argument that “cock-a-doodle-doo!” is a semblance or human imitation of what roosters say. Then, he adds another distinction to the idea of articulate speech by changing the analysis of the compound from “those beings whose voice is articulate” to “those beings whose letters (or sounds) are articulate in their speech.”¹¹⁵ He adds a layer of meaning that might not be apparent or at all present in Pāṇini’s *sūtra*. Not only does the voice have to be articulate in the production of letters from the alphabet (as some parrots’ voices are) but the letters and sounds produced by that voice must be articulate in their speech or expression; this is essentially the difference between producing articulate sounds and producing articulate phonemes (divisions of words that can convey individual meaning in their expression). The subtler layer of meaning here is that “those whose letters are articulate in their speech” also takes on connotations of articulation in the sense of “intelligible and more developed,” because these letters and syllables express articulate notions. A voice must not only be articulate, but also articulate *sounding*. Connotations of intellect as humans know it are implicit in Patañjali’s interpretation of the *sūtra*.

Patañjali’s largest addition to the understanding of Pāṇini’s *sūtra* is his insertion of *varṇa* into the idea of an articulate, manifest voice. The focus on *varṇa* also appeared in the *Yogasūtra* commentary, in which the *bhāṣya* described speech as *varṇa*-based: “the holder of meaning is in *the sound units (letters, phonemes, or syllables)* of speech.” It is not surprising that these two dif-

¹¹⁵ The analysis of the compound changes from a straight *bahuvrīhi* into a *bahuvrīhi* that is a *lopa samāsa*, where the element “*varṇa*” is not explicitly represented in the compound but is elided. This is possible because the word *vyakta* is a past participle, meaning that it can be placed first in a compound without indicating that it is an adjective of the following element(s) in the compound. Hence the word *vyakta* might not necessarily modify *vāk*. Nāgeśa specifically addresses this in his commentary: “*vāci śabde || niṣṭheti vyaktaśabdasya pūrvanipātaḥ.*” (“As regards the word ‘*vāc*’ (=speech), the irregular first position of the word ‘*vyakta*’ in the compound (*vyaktavācām*) is according to the “*niṣṭha*” type of suffix [=past passive participle].”)

ferent schools of thought would base their discussion of voice on the element of *varṇa*, since it is a key feature of language, and both discussions are linguistic in focus. *Varṇa*'s meaning is difficult to fix precisely in the *Yogasūtra* commentaries. *Varṇa* generally denotes variety in things ranging from colors, kinds, and letters to people and musical sounds; all of these meanings indicate variety on a superficial or perceptible level, something that shows difference in its outward appearance. Therefore, it is ideal for conveying meaning in language, since different *varṇas* (as letters or syllables) perceptibly indicate differences in meaning to the listener. The focus on *varṇa* as Sanskrit syllable in the grammar debate seems an unfair bias toward a Sanskrit-centered discourse that necessarily excludes animals, but scholars of language would naturally recur to this. Additionally, it is noteworthy that for the *Yogasūtra* discussion, *varṇa* is key in determining meaning of speech, while in the grammar discussion, *varṇa* is key in determining a being's articulation.

The later grammar commentators further enhance Patañjali's discussion. Seventeenth-to-eighteenth-century commentator Nāgeśa states that it is implicit that not every being has articulate speech because Patañjali specified "*all of those who have manifest voice*," demonstrating that the discussion was never all inclusive (there are also those who do not have manifest voice). But Nāgeśa adds his own opinion—that animals lack articulate voice. Kaiyaṭa (ca. eleventh century CE) contributes to Patañjali's discussion by adding that parrots, mynahs, and others do not innately (*svabhāvikam*) have an articulate voice. This is an interesting comment; such birds obviously *can* produce articulate voicing of sounds innately if they are able to do so at all. However, with this statement Kaiyaṭa makes an observation I referred to earlier: parrots speak human languages only when in captivity, not in nature. Kaiyaṭa expresses this with "the range of some

of the letters/sounds (in parrots, mynahs, and so on) is because of the will (*vaśa*) and effort of humans,” meaning that the will and dominion of humankind must be present for parrots to articulate articulately. On one hand, Kaiyaṭa attributes the will and determination to humans, thus removes a great deal of the birds’ own agency in their speech. On the other hand, he makes an observation about parrot speech in captivity that western biologists only articulated in the twentieth century.

Despite the discussion’s conclusions about the inarticulate nature of animal voice, the whole discourse would please cognitive ethologists today in that Patañjali questions and justifies his distinctions of human and animal, but does not unthinkingly commit anthropodenial.¹¹⁶ Ethologist Frans De Waal uses this term to indicate how humans underestimate commonalities between humans and other animals; we deny that other animals can act, think, or manifest behaviors in ways that we humans can. Patañjali himself problematizes human notions about language and what we think about animal voice. While he ultimately undermines the idea that animal speech is articulate, he makes a deliberate effort to define human speech in the context of other animal speech and he concerns himself with examining his definition and others’ definitions, as do his later commentators.

In order to distinguish his definition of human voice from other animal voice, Patañjali has to gesture to a perceived lack in animals’ speech: “in the voice of these (roosters), all of the letters starting from ‘a’ are not manifest.” Nāgeśa reiterates this idea and adds that “the meaning of ‘those who are *vyakta* (articulate)’ is those in whose voice the whole range of sounds starting

¹¹⁶ Elliot Sober, “Comparative Psychology Meets Evolutionary Biology: Morgan’s Canon and Cladistic Parsimony,” in *Thinking with Animals*, 85. The discussion of anthropodenial first appeared in Frans De Waal, “Anthropomorphism and Anthropodenial: Consistency in our Thinking about Humans and Other Animals,” *Philosophical Topics* 27 (1999): 255-80.

with ‘a’ are articulated *in a fully manifest form*” (*vaikharīrūpāyām*). I will return to the notion of a fully manifest (*vaikharī*) form below, but I want to highlight that he situates the whole range of sounds in the human voice alone, with the complete range not present in other animals. The fact that he clarifies this designation of “articulate” means it is an important one for him.

The identification of this lack—an incomplete range of Sanskrit letter production in animal voice—is an accusation prevalent among anthropocentric thinkers when analyzing animals. Derrida notes this mode of labeling animals as “lacking,” “poor,” or “deprived,” a critique that declares the incomplete nature of animals in some capacity with regard to humans in order to signal difference and inferiority. Derrida reminds us that when thinkers focus on deprivation and “what is lacking in animals,” those thinkers align themselves with Heidegger’s school. Heidegger considered animals to be *weltarm*, “poor in world” or impoverished, because he believed that animal behavior lacked meaning and was not “world-forming.” I argue that Sanskrit grammarians consider animals to be impoverished in *varṇavyaṅjana* and establish a dichotomy persistent to this day in the grammatical tradition that divides human speech and animal speech as *vyaktavāk* (articulate voice) and *avayktavāk* (inarticulate voice).¹¹⁷ Sanskrit language defines animal speech by negation, with the privative particle *-a* signaling what is not there. In all fairness to Martin Heidegger, he states that he does not designate animals in this way to create a hierarchy of humans over other animals,¹¹⁸ but simply recognizes a lack that, if anything, is worthy of human sympathy and compassion. In all fairness to Patañjali, he does not generalize about lacks or impoverished speech; he is clear to make his comments species specific to the chicken, which

¹¹⁷ Per my conversations with *vaiyākaraṇa* Dr. Dīpaka Dongre Bhaṭṭa, March 2010, Mysore.

¹¹⁸ Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I am*, 155, citing Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 194.

Derrida would have applauded. What Derrida most resented was the designation of an abstract general idea of “the animal” when there are so many animals, so many species, and so many individuals within species.

A comparison of the two commentators’ language reveals an ideological difference that may have developed over time. Kaiyaṭa, commenting on the *Mahābhāṣya* in the eleventh century, identifies that parrots, mynahs, and other birds do not innately have these capacities of articulation, while Nāgeśa, seven centuries later, writes that “animals lack an articulate voice like that of humans, etc.” Without reading too much into one brief statement within a lengthy commentary written for an even more immense work, Nāgeśa intentionally or unintentionally projects some of the same humanist dichotomous discourse of man versus beast that European “enlightened” rationalist thinkers were articulating at exactly the same historical moment. This discourse in Europe hyper-valued the mind, man, and the agency of humans, things that resonate with Nāgeśa’s discourse.

Patañjali raises an intriguing point when he rejects the common assumption that roosters say, “cock-a-doodle-doo!” (in Sanskrit, roosters really say “coo-coo!” hence their name *kukkuṭa*). He declares, “This is an imitation of them” [i.e., a human imitation of what roosters say] (*anukaraṇam etat teṣāṃ*). He continues the idea that roosters do not say such things by stating that “articulate voice” refers to those whose letters and sounds are articulate in speech. In stating that “coo-coo!” or “cock-a-doodle-doo!” is only an approximation of what roosters actually voice, he indirectly communicates that humans are incapable of producing the exact vocalizations of roosters; we can only produce an imperfect imitation, a resemblance (*anukaraṇam*). He does not appreciate the lack in humans of fully articulating rooster vocalizations, although this is

not too surprising for a grammarian working under the assumption that the Sanskrit language is the perfect and only paradigm. Nonetheless, he does not seem to have realized that what is manifested (*vyakta*) as the articulations of this bird is beyond the scope of the human organs of speech so well studied in Sanskrit *śikṣā*, the *Vedāṅga* or study of pronunciation and articulation.

Parrot Vaiśampāyana, however, appears to have studied *śikṣā* in Bāṇa's *Kādambarī*. Further, Bāṇa appears to be conversant with the grammarian discussion of animal speech from the commentaries, or, this sort of discourse about speech and articulation was common by the sixth century CE. Bāṇa alludes to this discourse in a parodied parallel of the grammarian's debate using similar terminology. Vaiśampāyana has mastered the whole range of Sanskrit *varṇas*:

(T)he king, having heard it, was amazed, and joyfully addressed his minister Kumārapālita- 'Thou hast heard the bird's **clear enunciation of consonants**, and the **sweetness of his intonation**. This, in the first place, is a great marvel, that he should raise a song in which **the syllables are clearly separated**; and there is a combination of **correctness with clearness in the vowels and anunāsikas**. Then again, we had something more than that: for in him, though a lower creation, are found the accomplishments, as it were, of a man, in a pleasurable art, and the course of his song is inspired by knowledge. . . whereas, generally, birds and beasts are only skilled in the science of fearing, eating, pairing, and sleeping.'

Kumārapālita replied: 'Where is the wonder? For all kinds of bird, **beginning with the parrot and the maina** (sic), repeat a sound once heard, as thou, O king, knowest; so it is no wonder that exceeding skill is produced either **by the efforts of men**, or in consequence of **perfection gained in a former birth**. Moreover, they formerly possessed a voice like that of men, with clear utterance. The indistinct speech of parrots, as well as the change in elephants' tongues, arose from a curse of Agni.'¹¹⁹

Bāṇa artfully and comically summarizes many ideas that arise in this report. He refers to the debate on the capacities of bird speech and distinct speech. He tangentially mentions the sub-continental ideology of animals perfecting themselves in former births. He admits that birds speak through the efforts of men (*puruṣaprayatna* in the Patañjali commentary). He confirms the particular perceived beauty of bird voice as some Brahmins had evaluated it earlier in regard to the *Taittirīya* recitation, here expressed as "the sweetness of his intonation." Finally, Bāṇa mocks

¹¹⁹ *The Kādambarī of Bāṇa*, trans. by C. M. Ridding, 11.

the assumed humanist dichotomy—human skills and knowledge versus “birds and beasts... skilled in ...eating, pairing, and sleeping”—indicating that this division existed in discourses in South Asia as well as in the west.

Returning to the debate on articulateness, Nāgeśa refers to yet another discourse in his commentary on this Pāṇini *sūtra* and other *sūtras*. He interprets Patañjali’s definition of articulate voice in saying, “the letters starting with ‘a’ are articulated in those whose *voice has forms that are fully manifest and articulate*. This is the meaning of ‘they are articulate.’” He expresses this idea in the phrase “*yeṣāṃ vāci vaikharīrūpāyām*.” His interpretation of “articulate” alludes to one part of a four part theory of speech that Bhartṛhari (ca. 450-500 CE) developed.

Bhartṛhari, another early theorist of the Sanskrit language whose dating falls roughly between Patañjali and Kaiyaṭa, elaborated some ideas about classifications of voice that were extant since the late Vedic period, as Nāgeśa later determined.¹²⁰ The four classifications were *parā vāk* (also called *pratibhā*), *paśyantī vāk*, *madhyamā vāk*, and *vaikharī vāk*, according to the degree to which the voice is manifest, from least to most.¹²¹ Early philosophers of language typically considered the least manifest forms of *vāk* to be immanent formations of speech or language, and also the most representative of *Brahman* (the universal, the *Veda*, etc.). In his *Vākyapadīya*, Bhartṛhari writes that *parā vāk* is *śabdabrahman*,¹²² the word-Brahman associated with divine, revealed sound. This divine speech is, incidentally, the least manifest of all forms of speech, while *vaikharī vāk*, at the opposite end of the spectrum, represents the most manifest, mundane,

¹²⁰ R. C. Dwivedi, “Bhartṛhari and Kashmir Śaivism,” *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 72-73 *Amṛtamahotsava* 1.4 (1991-1992): 105.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid., 101.

and least divine speech.¹²³ Bhartṛhari affected great influence on thinkers of the *Śaiva tantra* system, including Abhinavagupta and later *Vedānta* philosophers. Some of his ideas that gained currency in tantric thought include the notions that “all knowledge is permeated by word, (and) that all knowledge is *vāc*, which is *pratyavamarśinī* or self-aware and is the source of all branches of knowledge and art.”¹²⁴

Nāgeśa was one follower of Bhartṛhari’s linguistic theory, which appears in the commentary for this Pāṇini *sūtra* in his description of *vyakta* voice as having the form of *vaikharī*. Elsewhere, Nāgeśa locates the four forms of voice in the body: “*parā vāk mūlacakrasthā paśyantī nābhisaṁsthitā | hṛdisthā madhyamā jñeyā vaikharī kaṇṭhadeśagā ||*”¹²⁵ “Supreme voice is located at the root *cakra*, *paśyantī* (visible) at the navel, the middle voice is known to be placed in the heart, and uttered voice is at the position of the throat.” According to this theory, *vaikharī*, apart from being uttered with the breath, is not particularly special.

In contrast, “*pratibhā* (*parā vāc*) was common to all beings, birds and beasts; it was regarded as a flash of intelligence and also as constituting the meaning of a sentence,”¹²⁶ according to Bhartṛhari. This level of speech conveys the most fundamental layer of content, and again, is

¹²³ Ibid., 96.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 102.

¹²⁵ *Paramalaghumañjūṣā*, 11. My translation. Sanskrit passage cited by Dwivedi, “Bhartṛhari and Kashmir Śaivism,” 105.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 104. This discourse is, of course, not restricted to the distant past, but is also apparent in much literature from the subcontinent, including the *Kuyir Pāṭṭu*, a twentieth-century poetry cycle of Paratiyār. This work reveals the poet’s obviously *advaita* leanings. The cuckoo speaks in human language in poem three (*māyakkuyilatu tāṇ māṇṭavar pēccinīlōr māyaccol kūra*, lines 11-12), Bharati wonders if he might take bird form in his next birth (*maṇṭavuru nāṇkikkuyiluruvam vārātō?*, line 27, poem one), there is a lightning flash of sweet taste in the bird’s presence (*miṇṇar cuvai tāṇ melitāy mikaviṇitāy*, line 18, poem one), and the cuckoo’s song of “coo-coo-coo” brings the whole world’s meaning to Bharati’s mind, akin with Kashmiri Śaivism’s understanding of *parā vāk* (*kukkukku venru kuyil pāṭum pāṭṭinīlē tokka poruḷellam tōṇriyaten*, poem one, lines 33-34). Paratiyār, Cuppiramaṇiya C., *Kuyir Pāṭṭu* (Madras: South India Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Company, 1965).

the least manifest speech form. With an understanding of this aspect of Nāgeśa's commentary, we see that the whole discussion of *vyaktavāk* versus *avyaktavāk* is not the hierarchy of voice that one might imagine. If we expand our concept of language to include the idea that articulate voice might not indicate superior voice, the analysis of animal speech by Patañjali's commentators and the criticisms of anthropocentrism expressed by numerous scholars need reconsideration. We need not attribute knowledge or any particularly exemplary qualities to articulate speech except that it is articulate within the context of Sanskrit phonetics.

Speech, Subjectivity, and Story-telling

One cannot escape an analysis of speech that uses criteria centered on language. It is certainly challenging to develop other models to describe non-humans that do not rely upon human terms. Derrida favors discussions of inscribed "traces" as a way to avoid human-like forms of language and communication. However, humans generally formulate definitions and meanings of language that assert our authoritative domination over other beings, even as simple as Kaiyaṭa's crediting an animal's speech to human efforts to make that animal speak. In the impossibility of removing language and forms framed in human modes from the question at hand, a reevaluation of agency and subjectivity is necessary.

The tantric and Vedantic philosophical traditions that utilized Bhartṛhari's model for speech concerned themselves with language, and also with subjectivity. The Kashmiri Śaivas who embraced Bhartṛhari's speech analysis also embraced the idea that "consciousness and its contents are identical both in manifest and unmanifested forms."¹²⁷ This tradition, headed by Abhinavagupta (tenth-eleventh century CE), resolved the dichotomy of mind and matter one mil-

¹²⁷ Dwivedi, "Bhartṛhari and Kashmir Śaivism," 107.

lennium before quantum physicists took up a similar approach toward material-discursive phenomena. Other schools of *Vedānta* besides Kashmiri Śaivism opposed the conceptualization of subject and object as independent, which was the project of so many schools of western humanism. For Kashmiri *advaita* Śaivism, there is no difference between observer and observed. Objectification is simply the externalization of the inner reality and the subject is the object.¹²⁸ This perspective on subjectivity is valuable in appreciating the Brahmin-bird entanglement and the transpositions that pre- and post-date this school's flourishing of inquiry.

While transpositions between beings was a more facile project for such thinkers, others, like Heidegger, found it difficult to imagine. Even Vaiśampāyana considered such transpositions a challenge, although he desired to return to human form: "...I sorrowfully thought how hard it would be to rise from being a bird to being a Brahman, not to say a saint, who has the bliss of heaven."¹²⁹ Nonetheless, such entanglements did occur in numerous Indian traditions and texts. The identification of the Taittirīyas with or as birds is just one example in which texts articulate and promote these entanglements. New materialist approaches to the entangled manifestations of matter and discourse aid our understanding of such processes of identification. Barad speaks of differentiating and not of othering; the concern is not separation but making connections and commitments.¹³⁰ If we remove notions of separation from the ideas of "partridge" and "person," transposition is easier. If our textual and recitation traditions are committed to avian ideas and ideals, our names and texts become entangled with those birds. If we cannot literally transpose or

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ *The Kādambarī of Bāṇa*, trans. by C. M. Ridding, 202.

¹³⁰ Barad, "Matter feels, converses,..." Ch. 1.3 in *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies*.

do not want to accept ideas of entanglement, we can at least go with animals part of our way, to imagine better poetry and textual recitation, or to communicate our shared experiences and stories.

My presentation of multiple story variants for the partridge tale is exemplary of the multiplicity of narrations that echo across India and many literary traditions. A. K. Ramanujan rejected the idea of a single *Ur*-text as the original source for any story tradition; rather, he suggested that multiple versions of tales were an “endemic pool of signifiers (like a gene pool).”¹³¹ He located the multiplicity of story forms within scientific discourse, suggesting that stories reproduce within a spatial context. I argue that new materialist discourse offers new modes for understanding such story traditions. In Barad’s model accounting for the variety of story creations, she says that “structures are to be understood as material-discursive phenomena that are iteratively (re)produced through ongoing material-discursive intra-actions.”¹³² This allows for endless complexity in open systems that include transfers and transpositions between spheres that are more material or more discursive in nature.

Barad adapted her mode of explaining story variants from Donna Haraway, another scientist whose theoretical work and social critique fit neatly into Barad’s new materialism. Haraway wrote, “diffraction patterns record the history of interaction, interference, reinforcement, (and) difference. Diffraction is about heterogeneous history, not about originals. Unlike reflections, diffractions do not displace the same elsewhere, in more or less distorted form, thereby

¹³¹ A. K. Ramanujan, “Three Hundred Rāmāyaṇas: Five Examples and Three Thoughts on Translation,” in *Many Rāmāyaṇas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia*, ed. by Paula Richman (Berkeley: Oxford University Press, 1991), 46.

¹³² Karen Barad, “Re(con)figuring Space, Time, and Matter,” in *Feminist Locations: Global and Local, Theory and Practice*, edited by Marianne DeKoven (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 98.

giving rise to industries of [story-making about origins and truths]. Rather, diffraction can be a metaphor for another kind of critical consciousness.”¹³³ Observing differences among story variants can reveal information about critique and interactions between social groups in a way that reflected, identical story repetitions cannot. The *tittira* tales feature narrative processes that are observable as diffractions rather than distortions of stories. This small phenomenon is analogous to the larger tradition of narration in India, in which diffracted variations voice different concerns and priorities. Further, choosing *birds* to voice these narrations can express this diffraction well. The parrot’s mimicry is almost identical to our voice, but is still a resemblance of a text recited or imagined elsewhere. Although virtually the same, the bird’s voice adds something more, some level of diffraction desired by early Sanskrit writers. The parrot voices a diffraction of our speech, and similarly, we imitate the rooster’s speech, which is again a diffraction (“cock-a-doodle-doo!”).

Conclusion: The (Dis)location of the Human

Singling out bird speech and language is one mode to explore how Sanskrit writers dealt with identity and difference. Interspecies transpositions and the phenomenon of the Brahmin-bird entanglement help us understand how writers and thinkers articulated their own identities and made distinctions about their speech in relation to others. Brahmin-bird names for ascetic practices and *śākhā* lineages alike are manifestations of this entanglement within the Sanskrit language itself. The stories that I have identified as the Taittirīya’s etiology are diffracted attempts at justifying and positioning the bird and the human in an entanglement that was in place well be-

¹³³ Donna Haraway cited by Barad, “Matter feels, converses,...” Ch. 1.3 in *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies*.

fore the fourth century BCE, when Pāṇini first addressed the entanglement. My analysis of these etiological stories also suggests explanations as to why the partridge and the parrot held such fascination for Brahmanical writers. In part, they imagined birds as the retainers of Brahmanical lineages that were somehow threatened or endangered. The Buddhist rendering of the partridge story articulates this Brahmin-bird entanglement as well, but does so in order to mark Buddhist identity and difference.

Examining animal speech and voice allows us to reevaluate the agency of speech acts in a tradition where recitation may be more significant than original composition. This new model for understanding agency, which de-prioritizes intention and acknowledges the complex relations between matter and discourse, allows for creativity within schemas of traditional recitation and mimicry, as the speaker always contributes something to the telling. This model of voiced agency also accounts for episodes of autobiographical speech acts concealed within broader projects of narration, repetition, and transmission of texts. For example, Bāṇa's *Kādambarī* presents narration as the mode of textual transmission and negotiates interspecies relations by first acknowledging that the Brahmin-bird entanglement exists—and had existed since the Vedic period—and then using humor to illustrate these complex relations. In contrast, the *Jātakas*' way of negotiating interspecies relations and speech ultimately uses animal-voiced agency to comment on religious identity and the other, for conversion purposes and to teach Buddhist *dharma*.

Spatial relations, anthropomorphism, and egomorphism highlight other ways to consider the distinctions of species and speech that arose in pre-modern South Asia. Bird-mediated spatiality can illustrate certain aspects of Indian religious ideologies such as rebirth on a vertical axis

and interspecies conversations for more mundane purposes on a horizontal axis. I acknowledge the value of identifying anthropomorphism and egomorphism in literature, but I also suggest that literary forms such as fables, seemingly dominated by outward suggestions of anthropomorphism, do not always relegate the animal to purely allegorical reductions.

Whereas other scholars tend to critique such anthropomorphism, I suggest we bring a different valuation of agency into our analyses of speech. By de-prioritizing meaning- and intention-based agency in speech acts, animal enactments mediated through speech and voice can offer exemplars that are not only allegorical. Rather, they demonstrate the ideal behaviors that humans wish to have, as in the *Śukapota Divyāvadāna* story. This tale reveals that the parrot chicks' speech acts contain both agency and value. Understood within the recitation tradition, such acts are not derivative of human behaviors at all, as is the usual interpretation of fables exhibiting anthropomorphism. Perhaps while reading and interpreting such texts, we unintentionally anthropomorphize, and our anthropocentric position prevents us from observing that parrots (and indeed many animals) manifest ideal qualities and behaviors that are not solely human in nature. Attributing such behaviors—articulation and mimicry—to humans, when they occur among other species, brings *our* analytical reading into texts and artistic creations. Sometimes, anthropomorphism is only present because we read it into texts.

The examination of South Asian ontological understandings of birds and other living beings offers another way to explore the possibilities of animal entanglement, as present in Vedic, dharmashastric, and ayurvedic discourses. These taxonomies present remarkable paradigms for observing speech and voice in Indian texts, including grains that cry or speak and *yogins* who

attain understanding of animal speech by deconstructing and reconstructing the noises that make up their speech patterns, which are laden with the meaning built into such language by convention.

The Sanskrit grammarian discussion reveals that their project was not to transpose into the animal, as other Sanskrit writers attempted, but rather to position human voice in relation to animal voice. The grammarians were preoccupied with determining if there was any transposition between human and non-human speech because Pāṇini's *sūtra* and the *dhātupāṭha* might have suggested a lack of distinction between animal and human speech. The implications of Pāṇini's original message forced Sanskrit linguists to define and distinguish animal and human voice. Pāṇini's masterwork on the Sanskrit language presented a potential animal-human entanglement that was too much for later grammarians, even for Patañjali. The entanglement appeared in Paninian discourse but concerned the discourse (i.e., speech) of animals and humans. As a result, the grammarians endeavored to articulate the materiality of human speech as different from animal-manifested speech. This whole commentary elegantly negotiates the placement of animal and man through the commentators' own definitions of speech and language.

Embedded in Nāgeśa's commentary is a further classification of speech within the broader discussion: Bhartṛhari's taxonomy of voice. Approaching this taxonomy via Śaiva tantric and Vedantic thought that had currency at the time of Patañjali's commentators allows us to evaluate animal speech in a way that does not demote animal voice within a hierarchy. Further, Bhartṛhari's classification of voice negotiates definitions of speech for humans and animals within a system that acknowledges the material-discursive entanglement of phenomena. Bhartṛhari's

classification presents a spectrum of speech (a discursive topic) that ranges from more material (*vaikharī* voice) to less material (*parā* or ultimate voice). The least material phenomenon of voice, *parā vāk*, is laden with valuable content and meaning, thus the immaterial aspects of *vāk* contain potentially the greatest discursive content. Bhartṛhari's system presents an early precursor of the material-discursive entanglement developed by Barad in the twenty-first century. The affinity of these two thinkers justifies my application of new materialist thought to my analysis of voice in early Indian discussions of voice and speech.

Other early Indian articulations of voice and speech to explore in the future include additional diffractions of the partridge tale extant in the *Paksi Pakarana*, the extended *Mahāvamsa*, and the *Vāyu Purāṇa*. Further contexts that negotiate animal speech in relation to humans, such as the *Haṃsadūta* (*Goose Messenger*) of Vedānta Deśika, the *Pañcatantra*, and myriad other works, would also enrich this study. Ultimately, all of these Indian thinkers used speech in both animals and humans to articulate their own paradigms for understanding themselves and their complex environments that included animals. Their texts involving “repetition,” preservation, and other animal enactments detail the paradigms for us as they might have done for listeners and readers of the past.

“O people, we have been taught the language of birds, and we have been given from all things. Indeed, this is evident bounty.” *Quran* 27:16.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ *Quran* 27:16. Sahih International Translation, accessed Nov. 8, 2014, <http://www.bayt-al-hikma.com/Quran.aspx?q=27:16>.

Appendix A

Pāli text of the *Tittirajātaka* excerpt (for my English translation, see “Partridge Pundit’s Tale” in *Etiological Story Cousins*)

Tittirajātaka (story 438)¹³⁵

atīte bārāṇasiyaṃ brahmadatte rajjaṃ karente eko disāpāmokkho ācariyo bārāṇasiyaṃ pañcasatānaṃ māṇavakānaṃ sippaṃ vācento ekadivasaṃ cintesi.....

(....)

.....eko tittiro pi tattha nibaddhavāso ahosi, so ācariyassa māṇavānaṃ mante¹³⁶ vācentassa sutvā tayo pi¹³⁷ vede uggaṇhi. māṇavā tena saddhiṃ ativissāsikā ahesuṃ.

aparabhāge māṇavesu nipphattiṃ appattesu yeva ācariyo kālam akāsi,¹³⁸ māṇavā tassa sarīraṃ jhāpetvā¹³⁹ vālukāthūpaṃ katvā nānāpupphehi pūjetvā rodanti paridevanti.

atha te tittiro “kasmā rodathā” ti āha. “ācariyo no sippe aniṭṭhite yeva kālakato,¹⁴⁰ tasmā rodāmā” ti.

“evaṃ sante mā cintayittha, ahaṃ vo sippaṃ vācessāmīti”.

“tvaṃ kathaṃ jānāsīti?”

“ahaṃ ācariye tumhākaṃ vācente sutvā va tayo vede paguṇe akāsin” ti.

“tena hi attano paguṇabhāvaṃ amhe jānāpehīti.”

¹³⁵ *The Jātaka*, Pāli edition, vol. 3, entire story 536-543, this excerpt 536-8.

¹³⁶ The term *mante*, the plural form of *manta* (Sanskrit *mantra*) is of interest for animal language within the compounded Buddhist term *sabbarāvajāṇanamanta* appearing in *Jātaka* story 415, in which a spell or formula allows one to understand animal sounds.

¹³⁷ The word *pi* (Sanskrit *api*) here has the sense of totality or entirety.

¹³⁸ This preterite form builds from a modified "s" aorist of *kr* extended grade in Sanskrit (*akārṣīs*, *akārṣīt*), used either for second or third singular in Pāli. The double consonant (*rṣ*) is reduced because of retention of the long vowel (*ā*); the final -i shortens according to Insler’s Law (if the penultimate vowel in a polysyllabic word is long, then the final vowel will be short).

¹³⁹ This is a causative gerund with a Sanskrit parallel from root *kṣā* (to burn, to catch fire).

¹⁴⁰ *Kālakata* instead of *kālagata* is one instance in Pāli where the voiced stop /g/ in *gata* has transformed into a voiceless stop /k/ due to influence of the first word in the compound, *kāla*.

tittiro “tena hi suṇāthā” ‘ti tesam gaṇṭhigaṇṭṭhāṇam¹⁴¹ eva pabbatamatthakā nadiṃ otārento viya osāresi.

maṇavā haṭṭhatuṭṭhā hutvā tittirapaṇḍitassa santike sippaṃ paṭṭhapesuṃ.

so pi disāpāmokkhācariyaṭṭhāne ṭhatvā te sippaṃ vācesī.

māṇavā tassa suvaṇṇapaṇjaraṃ karitvā upari vitānaṃ bandhitvā suvaṇṇataṭṭake madhulājādīni upaharatā nānāvaṇṇehi pupphehi pūjentā mahantaṃ sakkāraṃ karimsu.

“tittiro kira araṇṇāyatane pañcasate māṇave mante vācetīti” sakalajambudīpe pākaṭo ahosi...

¹⁴¹ This is a playful word repeating the Pāli version of Sanskrit *granthi* for knot or tie, sometimes with the implication of difficulty, doubt, or question. Here it indicates the bird's virtuosic mastery of the *Veda*.

*Appendix B*¹⁴²

English translation of Pāṇini *sūtra* 1.3.48, Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya*, and commentators' discussion

[Pāṇini *sūtra* expresses, "Use *ātmanepada*..."]

"In the sense of 'vyakta' voice[s] speaking together."

The Topic of Determining the Meaning of 'Vyaktavāk'

Patañjali [asks]:

"What is the meaning of 'vyaktavācām'?"¹⁴³

[Patañjali responds with a cited verse as an example of usage]

"Oh, my beauty, the roosters are singing all together!"¹⁴⁴

[Patañjali counters]

"One arrives here at this [the situation of using *ātmanepada*], even when 'vyaktavācām' is being said, because these [roosters] are also beings whose voice is manifested.¹⁴⁵ And they are beings whose voice is manifested for the following reason: when [something] is uttered¹⁴⁶ by a rooster, [people] say "The rooster says [sings, etc.]."¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² In parenthesis I have supplied the translation of a term into English or Sanskrit. In square brackets I have clarified the meaning, either because of the complexity of multiple voices in the discussion or because the statements are compact due to the commentarial style of Sanskrit. I have used bold for content in the original Sanskrit which a commentator writes in order to add another layer of meaning to a word or phrase.

¹⁴³ Throughout this excerpt, I change my translation for the word "vyakta" as the commentators develop different connotations for the word and express this in their discussion. Thus, the translation of "vyakta" varies in the text from "manifested" or "uttered" and ends as "articulate."

¹⁴⁴ This example is meant to illustrate proper grammatical Sanskrit verbal usage when animals talk (using *parasmaipada*), reserving *ātmanepada* for humans.

¹⁴⁵ As is apparent from the example cited.

¹⁴⁶ Using root *vad* in *udite*.

¹⁴⁷ This statement is meant to challenge the use of *parasmaipada* for animal voice by arguing that surely roosters have manifest, articulate speech when they make noise; hence we say, "the roosters 'speaks.'"

“Then, if ‘*vyaktavācām*’ (of those beings whose voice is articulate) is said, indeed, all beings [for which one can use root ‘*vad*’=to speak] can be said to be ‘those whose voice is articulate.’ Therefore, it will be understood that what is meant is **exceptionally** (*prakarṣa*) [articulate] i.e., ‘those who are especially articulate in voice.’ And who are these especially [articulate ones]? In those whose voice all the letters starting from ‘a’ are manifested. And in the voice of these [roosters], all of the letters starting from ‘a’ are not manifested.”

Kaiyaṭa [in his *Pradīpa*]:

“Where it is said, ‘*sarva eveti*’ (=‘Indeed, all...’) [and on from there]- Those who make a false meaning [say that] the meaning from the reading [of the *Dhātupāṭha*] is: ‘*vada vyaktāyām vāci*’¹⁴⁸ (=‘Root *vad* means articulate voice’).”

Nāgeśa [in his *Uddyota*]:

“‘All those who have articulate voice’ is not all inclusive, because of animals’ lack of articulate voice like that of humans and so on; hence he said ‘*ye...* [the passage starting at ‘those who are **especially** articulate,’ etc.]. In the [Patañjali] *Mahābhāṣya*, in the passage ‘*yeṣāṃ vāci...akārādaya*’ (= in whose voice the letters starting with ‘a’ are manifested), the meaning of ‘those who are articulate’ (=vyaktā) is of those in whose voice the whole range of letters starting with ‘a’ are articulated in a fully manifest form.”¹⁴⁹

Patañjali [expresses the opinion of a straw man to further his argument]:

¹⁴⁸ By convention, the *Dhātupāṭha* gives meanings in the locative case and adds -a to mark a verbal root.

¹⁴⁹ See my discussion of *vaikhari* (“fully manifested form”) in the section “*Oh, my beauty, the roosters are singing all together!*” *When Sanskrit Grammarians Speak about Speaking*.

“But these [roosters’] speech also manifests the letters starting with ‘a.’ And they are articulated because of the following reason: for, [people] say: ‘roosters say, <<cock-a-doodle-doo!>>’”¹⁵⁰

Nāgeśa:¹⁵¹

“Regarding Patañjali’s commentary at ‘*kukkuṭāḥ kukkuḍ*,’ the word ‘say’ (=‘*vadanti*’) needs to be added to the commentary. [In the next phrase,] ‘Thus people say’ is the logical construction of this sentence [thus people say that roosters say, ‘cock-a-doodle-doo.’]”

Patañjali: [his retort to the straw man he set up earlier]

“They say no such thing! This is an imitation of them [of what they say]. Or else, then, it would *not* be understood thus [in his analysis of Pāṇini’s compound]: ‘<<*vyaktavāca*>> are those beings whose voice is articulate.’ How is [the compound to be understood] then? ‘*Vyaktavāca*’ refers to those who in speech have phonemes that are articulate.¹⁵² And thus we have the commentary ‘of those whose voice is articulate.’” [Patañjali ends his commentary here.]

Kaiyaṭa [comments]:

“From ‘*atha vā*’ and on: even without ‘*prakarṣagati*’ (=‘what is meant is exceptionally’), basing on the word that establishes the case relationship in the *bahuvrīhi* [nominal compound], only humans are to be understood. From ‘*vyatkā vāci*’ and on, the meaning of ‘those whose letters are articulate’ is: those whose letters starting with ‘a’ are articulate. Parrots, mynahs, and so on do

¹⁵⁰ In Sanskrit, roosters actually say, “Cuckoo!” but I have rendered the expression as English-speaking humans imitate rooster speech.

¹⁵¹ Here he only clarifies the passage, adding what is elided from the Sanskrit commentary.

¹⁵² Here I have translated *varṇa* differently from above because I think the implication is that “those who in their voice express articulate sounds” makes the distinction that the sounds are articulate in the sense of “intelligible.” Patañjali makes the leap to saying that this is the kind of voice that speaks articulately about a topic. “Phonemes” translates this best, since a phoneme conveys meaning, while a letter of the alphabet typically does not. A phoneme is not too different from a Sanskrit *akṣara* combining consonant and vowel (or semivowel and vowel), which can convey meaning, as in the case of “*ye*.”

not innately have articulate speech whose range is all the letters, and moreover, the range of some of the letters is due to human effort; thus, in this case, there is no [use of] *ātmanepada*.”

Nāgeśa:

“As regards the word ‘*vāc*’ (=speech), the irregular first position of the word ‘*vyakta*’ [in the compound *vyaktavācām*] is according to the ‘*niṣṭha*’ (=past passive participle) [type of placement in compounds.]”

Sanskrit original of Pāṇini *sūtra* 1.3.48 commentary by Patañjali with the sub-commentaries of Kaiyaṭa and Nāgeśa

vyaktavācām samuccāraṇe || 48 ||

vyaktavāḥpadārthanirṇayādhikaraṇam

(*ākṣepabhāṣyam*)

vyaktavācāmiti kimartham ? ||

(*samādhānabhāṣyam*)

‘*varatanu sampravradanti*¹⁵⁴ *kukkuṭāḥ* ||’

(*samādhānabādhakabhāṣyam*)

vyaktavācāmityucyamānepyatra prāpnoti |

ete’pi hi vyaktavācaḥ || *ātaśca vyaktavācaḥ* | *kukkuṭenodite ucyate* — *kukkuṭo vadatīti* ||

(*samādhānasādhakabhāṣyam*)

evam tarhi ‘vyaktavācām’ ityucyate | *sarva eva hi vyaktavācaḥ* | *tatra prakarṣagatirvijñāsyate* — *sādhīyo ye vyaktavāca iti* || *ke ca sādhyāḥ ?* | *yeṣāṃ vācyakārādayo varṇāḥ vyajyante*¹⁵⁵ || *na caiteṣāṃ vācyakārādayo varṇā vyajyante* ||

(*Pradīpaḥ*) [Kaiyaṭa] *vyaktavācām* || 48 || *sarva eveti* | *ye vadavyarthasya kartāraḥ* | *vada vyaktāyām vācīti pāthādīti bhāvaḥ* |

(*Uddyotaḥ*) [Nāgeśa] *vyaktavācām* || 48 || *manuṣyādivattiraścām vyaktavāktvābhāvātsarve vyaktavāca ityasaṃgatam ata āha* — *ye iti* ||

bhāṣye yeṣāṃ vācyakārādaya iti | *yeṣāṃ vāci vaikhārīrūpāyāmakārādayo varṇā vyajyante vyaktā bhavanītītyarthaḥ* ||

(*samādhānabādhakabhāṣyam*)

¹⁵³ *Vyākaraṇamahābhāṣya of Patañjali*, vol. 2, 165.

¹⁵⁴ The question arises because the same verbal root *vad* applies to both human speech and animal cries according to the *Dhātupāṭha*. Both animals and humans have manifest, audible (*vyakta*) voice, but Patañjali is made uncomfortable by the grouping or possible confusion of animal speech with human speech, so he clarifies why this case can only apply to human voice and hence, determines that *ātmanepada* uses of *sam+pra+vad* are for human voice and *parasmaipada* for animals.

¹⁵⁵ *Vyakta* is the past passive participle of verbal root *vi+añj*, expressed here in the passive as *vyajyante*.

eteṣāmapī vācyakārādayo varṇā vyajyante || ātaśca vyajyante | evaṃ hyāhuḥ kukkuṭāḥ kukūḍi-
ti¹⁵⁶ ||

(Uddyotah) kukkuṭāḥ kukkuḍiti bhāṣyasya vadantīti śeṣaḥ | evaṃ janā āhuḥ ityanvayaḥ ||

(samādhānasādhakabhāṣyam)

naivaṃ te āhuḥ | anukaraṇametatteṣāṃ ||

atha vā naivaṃ viśāyate — vyaktā vāgyeṣāṃ ta ime vyaktavāca iti || katham tarhi ? || vyaktā vāci
varṇā yeṣāṃ ta ime vyaktavāca iti || vyaktavācāṃ || 48 ||

(Pradīpaḥ) atha ceti | vināpi prakarṣagatyā vyadhikaraṇapadabahuvrīhyāzrayaṇānmanuṣyā eva
gr̥hyante || vyaktā vācīti | vāci akārādayo varṇā yeṣāṃ vyaktāsteṣāmitiyarthaḥ | śukasārikādīnāṃ
na sarvavarṇaviṣayaṃ svābhāvikam vyaktavāktvamapi tu puruṣaprayatnavaśena kati-
payavarṇaviṣayamiti tatrātmanepadābhāvaḥ || 48

(Uddyotah) vāci śabde || niṣṭheti vyaktaśabdasya pūrvanipātaḥ || 48

¹⁵⁶ I suspect this is a typographical error in the Sanskrit print, since the passage below reads “kukkuḍ” as the onomatopoeia of rooster speech.

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